RURAL EVANGELISM

JAMES ELVIN WAGNER

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BY
JAMES ELVIN WAGNER

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DEDICATION

TO MY MOTHER

ANNIE JOSEPHINE WAGNER

WHO FOR SEVENTEEN YEARS POURED HER SOUL INTO MINE
THAT FOR THE THIRTY YEARS SINCE HER DEATH
MY WORK MIGHT IN LARGE MEASURE BE HERS
THESE PAGES ARE DEDICATED

Issued for
The Department of Evangelism
Board of Home Missions and Church Extension
Methodist Episcopal Church

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INTRODUCTION

THE need of evangelism in the local church that is participated in by the membership in general is to-day most insistent. And especially is this true in rural communities where pastors, in many instances, are obliged to minister to more than one community.

It is encouraging, therefore, to see coming from the press a book on Rural Evangelism such as Dr. James Elvin Wagner has here written. Its simple, straightforward presentation of practical methods of leading a church to active participation in the task of winning others to the fellowship with Jesus Christ and service for him is so absolutely free from any academic flavor that it will be a positive force in the ministry of every pastor of a rural community who is fortunate enough to come in contact with its message.

Like all great messages, this one on Rural Evangelism grows out of the developing personal experience and practice of the man delivering it. He knows whereof he speaks, and those who rejoice in a knowledge of the kingdom of God because of his ministry are many.

As a help in the efforts which the Depart-

ment of Evangelism of the Board of Home Missions and Church Extension of the Methodist Episcopal Church is making to bring the best in the field of evangelistic literature and method to the attention of pastors throughout the church, this volume from the life of a rural pastor is most welcome. And it is recommended enthusiastically for reading and study by the host of Methodist Episcopal pastors who are laboring heroically to make the rural communities of the land veritable garden spots of God.

The nation is looking to the Church of Jesus Christ as never before to fulfill its mission in making Christian every activity of life, in furnishing moral and spiritual stamina and vision for the youth of the land, and in giving mature life that poise of Christian experience which makes possible years of useful service.

To render the aid necessary to make this possible is the purpose of every Methodist Episcopal church. This little book will help every pastor to fulfill this purpose.

GEORGE B. DEAN,
Superintendent, Department of Evangelism, Board of Home Missions and Church Extension of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

FOREWORD

The following chapters are lectures delivered before the students of twelve colleges and theological seminaries, and the Summer Schools for Rural Pastors held during the summer of 1919 under the direction of the Department of Rural Work of the Board of Home Missions and Church Extension of the Methodist Episcopal Church, as representative of the Department of Evangelism of the Board.

It was found that while the lectures had been carefully prepared and written, contact with rural pastors in the Summer Schools suggested some modifications. These have been incorporated in the text as here presented. The direct conversational style used when first delivered has been preserved in order that the group intimacy may prevail in class room use of the lectures.

In preparing these lectures I have used my heritage of having been born in the country and having served as pastor of rural charges for fifteen years. I also have drawn on my extensive reading on the subject and thorough

discussion with Dr. George B. Dean, Superintendent of the Department of Evangelism of the Board of Home Missions and Church Extension of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

In presenting plans—and I have tried to do only that—I have confined myself to such as have been approved by successful experience. They are equally applicable to the country circuit and to the larger town or city charge. I do not make this statement hesitatingly, but with the assurance which actual testing in both country and city churches has given me. I began using the Unit or Group plan for evangelistic and other ends years ago, and have no fear in presenting it with the suggestions here set forth.

If the limits of this booklet permitted, three additional chapters, or lectures, should be included. The first would be on "The Church Hymnal and the Evangelistic Campaign," the second on "A Preaching Program," and the third on "Dangers of Professionalism." For lack of room I have given a little space to each subject in other lectures.

It is with feelings of deepest humility, and with many misgivings that I commit these pages to the public. I should not do it but

for the insistence of some in authority who believe they are needed. May their judgment be better than mine!

I make grateful acknowledgment to all who have given friendly criticism of the lectures as they were delivered; to the rural pastors who constituted the student body of the Summer Schools, for their courteous attention and kindly reception of my suggestions; to Mr. Ralph A. Felton, who, under the direction of Dr. Paul L. Vogt, Superintendent of the Department of Rural Work of the Board of Home Missions and Church Extension of the Methodist Episcopal Church, has been directly in charge of the Summer Schools for Rural Pastors, for suggesting their further usefulness; to the Rev. Harold E. Wilson, of the Bureau of Publicity, for complete revision of the manuscript; and, finally, to the Rev. George B. Dean, D.D., Superintendent of the Department of Evangelism of the Board of Home Missions and Church Extension, for friendly counsel and criticism in the original preparation of the lectures from which these pages have grown.

JAMES ELVIN WAGNER.

CHAPTER I

WHAT IS EVANGELISM?

An old English Grammar in defining "word" said, "A word is the sign of an idea." Very true; but how inconvenient it is that the same word does not uniformly connote the same idea to each of us! Previous experience, environment, age, occupation, training, have their influence upon the idea which any particular word will convey. So simple and familiar a word as "love" depends for its meaning upon the age, the experience, and the character of life previously led by the one using or hearing it. To the child it will mean something very different from what it suggests to the "maid in love"; and something more different still to a young mother holding her own first babe in her arms; while its richest meaning belongs to an old couple who have reared their children, seen them mated for life, have dandled their grandchildren on their knees, have worshiped God throughout life, and now in the twilight face the setting sun

together, and wait the summons to "come up higher." Love will convey different ideas and emotions to a clean-minded, clean-living man and to a voluptuary.

Evangelism is our subject. What does the term signify to your consciousness? Were you converted in a "gracious revival meeting" where the people sang with unction and the minister preached with power, and a strange spell was upon the multitude? Then examine your consciousness and see if you have not thought of that kind of a meeting when you have heard the term "evangelism." And, equally, if you were converted in a Sunday school class, where there were restless boys and girls, but a teacher who knew God and helped you to find him; or if you had a wise mother who brought you early to choose God as your God, you have probably thought of those experiences. They are definitely associated in your mind with the term "evangelism."

To get anywhere in these lectures we must each have the same concept when the term "evangelism" is used. It is important that as ministers we should understand terms alike; it is even more important that our lay hearers understand as we do the terms we use. What

do we mean, then, by the term "evangelism," and what do laymen generally understand us to mean?

I wonder if something like the following has not happened in many charges: It is six weeks since a Fall Conference adjourned when Brother Bundy was appointed to Rockwell charge. He was on duty and made a splendid impression the first Sunday after Conference, and by his pulpit work and visitation among the people since then has deepened that good impression, and his people are ready to follow his leadership. Thanksgiving time has arrived, and January with the revival meeting is only five weeks away. Rockwell is a splendid country village of a thousand population, in the midst of a thickly settled and very rich farming community, and the membership of Brother Bundy's church is the cream of the village and community around. It is Monday morning before Thanksgiving, and walking to the post office the new minister meets his leading member, a splendid farmer living in the finest home in the county. They stop for friendly greeting and after some conversation the minister says: "I'm glad we met this morning, Brother Shanks. I was intending to go out to see you.

You know January will soon be here, and I was wondering what we ought to do about our evangelistic campaign this year. What ought we to do?"

Many things can pass through an alert mind in a brief moment, and Brother Shanks has such a mind. What is his mental reaction to the term "evangelistic"? Does he first think, "A revival! And I raised my subscription so much this year that I have nothing in reserve. Wonder what it will cost me"?

Now, this good man is not stingy. He believes in giving liberally to every good cause. And there is no harm in the fact that revivals cost money. The danger lies in the fact that Brother Shanks thinks "money" when evangelism is mentioned.

We must manage some way to use that term, or another as good, without making Brother Shanks think first of dollars.

At that moment something like this may go through Brother Shanks's mind: "You have begun mighty well, Pastor; preached sane and real gospel sermons, and I like you; we all like you. I wonder if, when you get into revival meetings, you will begin giving us a lot of sensational slush and rubbish? I hope not,

but it makes me uneasy to think about it. Wonder why so many ministers preach so differently in a revival than at any other time. I simply can't stand teary stories, graveyard horrors, and such efforts to get the people worked up. Brother Bundy, I hope you can preach revival sermons that have meat in them."

There are reasons for the average layman thinking such thoughts. I have known pastors who did not really prepare their sermons until the revival meeting arrived, and then they quit thinking, quit sermon building, and began simply "boring for tears," or trying to awaken unusual sensations. Some evangelists cannot get into their stride until they find "something rotten in Denmark," and then they appear to be perfectly happy, forgetting that they are making many sore spots, and work of healing for pastors to do after they have had their little day of glory and are gone. So often the "something rotten in Denmark" has to be manufactured, or exaggerated, to gain the point. No wonder Brother Shanks hopes his pastor is not a sensationalist. Something must be done to prevent him from having such thoughts when evangelism is mentioned.

Then, flashing on the heels of the fear of sensationalism, there comes a memory to Brother Shanks. It is not so much a thought which can be put into words as a vision of what once happened. There had been a revival in his church, an enthusiastic evangelist who liked to make a big showing had been in charge. Everyone who had held up his hand, or could be coaxed down to the front of the tabernacle on any sort of proposition, had been compelled—no other word will do—to sign a card with a confession on it, and a place for the name, address and church preferred. These cards had been jealously kept, and finally had been divided among the pastors, but not until the evangelist had stated with great unction that the meeting had been a glorious success; the church had been awakened, souls had been saved, and the Lord had been greatly honored. Then he took up the cards, arranged in a number of neat stacks, with a rubber band around each stack, and distributed them among the pastors, taking care not to say how many any particular pastor received, lest there be hurt feelings, but stating the total number of converts had been five hundred and fifty. A magnificent

work! Brother Shanks, at the time, had wondered how many of those converts were from the Sunday school, brought in by faithful teachers; but he had not thought that cards signed by such faithful church members as himself, when urged to go forward to help others, would be counted. He had also been thankful for so many converts, and had felt sure his own church would be strengthened by the revival. He was glad, moreover, to do his part in the collection, although it helped inevitably to lay a foundation for future thoughts about dollars when his pastor should ask about the evangelistic campaign

After the evangelist had gone, they went over their cards. There were, for his church, fifty cards signed by children of the Sunday school, every one of whom would have been brought into the church that very season by the regular Decision Day service. Seventy-five were signed by the most faithful members of the church; twenty by newly arrived people who had their church letters and would soon have joined anyway; and twelve by supposedly genuine converts. They had then gone about finding those twelve. The first one they called on laughed at them. He said: "Why, I don't

want to join any church. I just wanted to shake hands with 'Henry,' and when I went down the sawdust trail to shake hands with him, they put that card under my nose and wouldn't let me go till I signed it. I put down 'Methodist' because my mother was a Methodist; but I'm not going to join any church"—and that ended the matter.

Out of the twelve, they secured five new members, and held them fairly well. Brother Shanks had wondered at the time why, if he and his pastor and a few more earnest Christian people had gone about it faithfully, they could not have done as well, or better, without the revival; and now he is fearful that Brother Bundy also may be a "nose counter," or that he may get that kind of an evangelist. We must divorce evangelism and "padded returns."

And, just here, Brother Shanks glances inquiringly at his pastor again. This time it has flashed through his mind, in a fraction of a second, that this pastor, or the evangelist he secures may take the bits in his teeth and run the meeting after some cast-iron method suited to himself but not to the community. Brother Bundy, or his evangelistic helper, may take the attitude of "I am it! Do as I say; work

as I direct; or cause the damnation of your neighbors and children." He is quite sure, in his own mind, that the day when great evangelistic results can be attained by the efforts of one man, or through the counsels of one man, is past. He believes that in order to achieve best results every member of the church must be engaged in the work, and that only as they are urged to work in their own way can they all be enlisted in the task. The people must feel responsible, with the pastor, for the work of evangelism.

Following this last thought, an expression of pain passes over Brother Shanks' strong face. He is wondering something like this: "Pastor, I have not heard anything to suggest it in your sermons, but in revivals you can never tell what ministers will do. You have not brought out any sort of hobby as yet, but I wonder if, in a revival, you will trot one out, or if you will get an evangelist who will ride one into town and out again." The average layman is almost compelled to think of this, because so many ministers and evangelists who really do keep their hobbies pretty well in hand at other times let them loose during the revival meeting.

I know a pastor, as sane usually as the average, always devoted and sincere, who, under the strain and fervor of revival preaching, could see nothing of importance except damnation through the dance. Dancing is no worse during the revival than at other times, but the preacher often becomes possessed during that period with the feeling that all young people are going to hell by that route, and he effectually drives them away from his services, not because they object to his condemning the dance so much as that he emphasizes that evil to the exclusion of all others and seems to imply that they are all committing that particular sin. The average layman may not approve of dancing, but he is absolutely shy of a minister, any minister with a hobby.

There are two particularly dangerous hobbies which are likely to be trotted out in a revival meeting. The first is the "second-blessing-holiness-hobby." Many men who in a sane way preach perfect love, sanctification, holiness, throughout the year, at revival meeting time will begin explaining the mystery of sanctification, and urging faith in their particular theory of it, until they have about them a small company of souls as possessed as

themselves with the idea that they know all the mystery of godliness.

I believe in holiness as sincerely as any man. In my mind there is not the slightest doubt that when one of the Lord's children comes to him with all his redeemed powers and all his possessions, and presents them upon his altar for service, something wonderful and beyond description happens to him. God takes him at his word; he becomes his Lord's for service. We need not less, but more preaching on consecration; not less, but more preaching on the life of "perfect love." But when a mere mortal man begins telling all the details of what happens in a believing and consecrated soul, using such terms as "old Adam," "carnal nature," "inbred sin," "eradication," and meaning, by "sanctification," that the roots of sin have been removed after a given method, I feel like rising to ask a question or two. How can a man who cannot tell how a flower gets its perfume, how our nostrils sense the perfume; how the flower gets its color, or we see it; how we digest food; think, feel, walk; understand what gravity is, or light, or life, dare attempt to tell what God does in a soul when he accepts it as an offering and equips it for

glorious service? Not the hobbyized doctrine of sanctification, but the indisputable fact of the power of a life rightly related to God needs to be preached.

The second hobby so apt to be trotted out just now is that of the immediate second appearing of our Lord. War and rumors of war, unrest, strife, and fears in men's hearts always bring forward this doctrine. Always a few give heed to it and watch for a particular kind of immediate appearing of Christ, while any terrible happening or event out of the ordinary brings a swarm of teachers and believers in such an appearance. Just now the country is full of this teaching and preaching. Every one of us is thinking about it more or less, and we ought to do so. But who knows enough about it to begin riding it as a hobby? No one knows either the manner or the time of his coming. Christ even said that such things were shut up with the Father. It ought not to be of nearly so much importance when he will appear, or how he will appear, as in what state of mind and heart we shall live and await his coming. Some way, some time, the day of reckoning will come, and he will be at hand. If we have lived according to

his teaching, we shall be ready when he comes.

The Scriptures afford one theme upon which one may preach forever and never become a hobbyist. Christ and his apostles and all great leaders have preached that sin is ruin, and that deliverance from sin can be had only through Jesus Christ. That is theme enough, and it needs to be testified and declared with all that it involves as an experience of life rather than explained as a philosophy. It is not an explanation of the gospel that saves, but acceptance of it as a fact.

It has taken but a moment for all this to flash through Brother Shanks's mind, and now he is ready to reply to his pastor's question. "Why, Brother Bundy, I want to follow your leadership, and I think all our people do. Get your plans laid and we will meet you on them. Don't think you must plan to do as we have always done. Just go at it in your own way, and count on us to fall in line."

These good and sincere men separate, each going his own way and each thinking his own thoughts. Does "evangelistic" mean the same thing to each of them? Interpreted in terms of method, Brother Shanks is anxious, a bit

fearful, but courageous enough to go forward in spite of his past and painful experiences; while the pastor is perplexed only as to what method will probably bring the best results. Interpreted in terms of results, each of them probably desires that the present membership of the church shall be stirred to action, and that the unsaved shall be brought into Christian fellowship. Brother Bundy thinks of the considerable number of his church members who are only nominal in their membership, who attend church when they feel like it, who are at prayer meeting not at all, and who can be depended upon for nothing except a trifling financial contribution, and wonders if evangelism has a mission to them, and what method will reach them. With a village and community population of some three thousand souls, of whom not more than seven hundred belong to any church, or make any public confession of faith, and where very few of the other twenty-three hundred ever attend public worship, what shall he do to bring the larger group to a consciousness of the claims of religion upon them? For him the great problem of evangelism is one of method. For each of us, when we have reached a definite decision as to the kind of product

we hope the evangelistic mill will grind out, the problem of building the mill and of making it deliver the desired grist still remains.

A few months ago Roosevelt and others were making hyphenated Americans very unpopular simply by calling attention to them. There were many loyal and splendid Americans of German descent in those days, and we have them still, but it is not proper to call them German-Americans; they are Americans. Many of us just now are growing very tired of other hyphenated citizens. It makes very little difference what name one writes before the hyphen; it is objectionable. For my own part Irish-American sounds quite as bad as German-American. Not because the Irish are objectionable, but because for any one who comes to our shores "American" is enough. It is quite bad enough, it seems to me, to have Democrats and Republicans lying one about the other and slandering each other, without giving place to members of foreign political parties among us. Sinn Feiners may be all right in Ireland, but America is no place for them or their agents. Let us have no hyphen in our American citizenship, political party membership, or church membership.

For we have hyphenated Methodists and Baptists and Presbyterians. They are Worldly-Methodists, Nominal-Baptists, Backslidden-Presbyterians. It may be straining a point to place a hyphen in these names, but they indicate my meaning. Americanization seeks to take the hyphen out of every name, and to leave every citizen among us a pure, one-hundred-per-cent American. That is an undertaking worthy the zeal of the crusaders. But if so, what of the work of evangelism? Should not its purpose be to take the hyphen out of the name of every churchman, every believer in the land? That, and more.

A pastor was conducting Sunday evening evangelistic services in an Eastern city. One evening he called for seekers, and a fifteen-year-old boy, small of stature, unkempt of body and clothing, knelt at the altar and was beautifully converted. He arose, his face shining with the inner light of redeeming love. It happened in that church that the "Money-bags" was also the most spiritually minded member, and was always deeply interested in the work of evangelism. After the benediction this good brother hurried down the aisle to the altar and putting one arm around the

pastor and the other about the lad, he exclaimed with genuine warmth: "Great, Pastor, great! Just think what has happened here! God has saved a soul, given himself to this lad! Isn't it glorious?"

"Yes, Brother Count," answered the pastor, "but what shall we do to *save* the lad?"

"What shall we do to save him? Why, Pastor, I don't understand you. We have nothing to do with it. God *has* saved him. What do you mean?"

"Yes, I know. But do you know this lad, and his home?" Just here one of the other members of the church wanted to speak to the lad, and the pastor and Brother Count were left alone.

"You don't know the boy, or his parents, but I know them all. This boy's father is a drunkard and blackguard. His mother is a drunkard and worse; she is a woman of the street. He has an older brother who is a genuine tough, and an older sister who is following her mother. When he gets home to-night, his father will be just about returning from the saloon. Later his mother and sister will come in. If they know where he has been to-night, and what he has done, they will

ridicule and maltreat him, and to-morrow will put him to doing things no Christian should do."

Brother Count had forgotten the beginning of the conversation, and was thinking solely of the boy and what to do for him, as he exclaimed, "Why, Pastor, what can we do to save the child?" using the very words of the pastor to which he had previously objected.

The pastor took the boy home with him that night, and the next day he and Brother Count found a good Christian home for him, and in due time got him legally placed there. Several years went by and the boy had become a man, and one fine day he entered one of the theological seminaries of the Methodist Episcopal Church to prepare himself for mission work in China. When was the work of evangelism done for this lad? At conversion? When placed in such an environment that he had a decent chance? Did the work of evangelism end for him at the church altar, or did it extend through the act of securing for him a Christian home? Probably redeeming grace did its work at the church altar; the people of the church did their part in bringing him to the altar and in securing for him a

Christian home; but he will not be finally saved until he has "worked out his own salvation" in faithful service where God shall call him.

Evangelism has to do with getting men saved. Laying aside all questions of method, to save men is to bring them to a keen personal sense of relationship with God, through conversion; so to relate them to their environment that they shall have opportunity to "work out their own salvation," and finally to help them to a place for service. The work of evangelism is to get men converted; to get the social order in which they live converted; to get converted men actually employed in the effort to save the world.

This series of lectures is intended, not to deal with what conversion is, what a Christianized social order is, but with the obligation of gospel ministers to bring such things to pass, and with methods for accomplishing that end.

CHAPTER II

EVERY PASTOR AN EVANGELIST

USING the term in the broad sense suggested in the previous chapter, can, ought every pastor to be an evangelist? Or, restricting the term to mean only getting converts, can every pastor be an evangelist? No doubt some will be stronger, more effective evangelists than others, but I unhesitatingly declare that every pastor, to justify his right to be in the ministry, must be an evangelist, must get converts.

I once heard the pastor of a college church, a man of attainments, of great ability and mature years, state that he did not know whether he had ever directly been the means of leading a soul to Christ. He had held meetings called revivals, but there had been no converts whom he could confidently claim as his own. No one had ever told him that his preaching or personal effort had brought him to Christ. He was not discouraged or distressed, but remarked, "I think it is my

duty and call to edify the church." I felt at the time, though I was but a student in the college, that he was losing the most effectual means for edifying the church when he failed to secure converts.

Are there various kinds of work for a minister other than evangelism, so that if he does any one of them he justifies his calling? Certainly, ministers have other duties than evangelism, but there is nothing any minister may be called upon to do, no number of things, however well he may do them, which can excuse him from the one great task of soul-winning and soul culture. Other things he may do, probably must do, but this one thing he must surely do.

There are singing ministers, and may the Lord increase their number and power. If through song they win men to Christ, they do well. They may do well as leaders of community singing, as stimulators of congregational singing, or good anthem singing, but they must not forget the real object of their being pastors. One privilege of every pastor is to know and appreciate the church hymnal. Any pastor who possesses a voice, whose ear is not too dull to harmonies, ought to sing,

and see to it that the hymnal is used correctly. The little red-backed book, the compilation of some ambitious leader of revival meeting hymnology, may have a mission, but it has no place or right in the worship of a Methodist Episcopal church. There is no better collection of hymns and tunes than the Methodist Hymnal, no more usable one, no more appropriate one for church worship, prayer meeting, revival meeting, or Sunday school. Some one said the other day, "Not one tune in twenty in the Hymnal is singable." That is a rash statement. There are but five hundred and sixty tunes in the Hymnal, several of them being used more than once. Then if only one tune in twenty is singable, there are but twenty-six singable tunes in the entire collection. Altogether aside from the splendid body of theology, worship, prayer, confession and inspiration contained in the written words of the hymns, any lover of music for its own sake can find at least two hundred and fifty splendid singable tunes in this collection and the remaining hymns will compare favorably with the best to be found in the average little red-backed song book. Real hymn tunes, like the best Scripture texts, require and repay

study. The trouble with most churches which find difficulty in using the Methodist Hymnal is that they do not use it correctly. They sing the hymns according to custom, with no attention to time or accent. If there were more singing ministers who had the grace and good sense to insist that the Hymnal be used correctly, the churches now using something else would soon find that the Hymnal, next to the Bible, is the best book of worship written, and that its collection of tunes is not excelled anywhere. But even such splendid work as that cannot justify any minister in neglecting or failing to win converts.

Some ministers are "glad-handers," "jolliers," and may the Lord increase their number, provided they also are evangelists. To be a real "mixer" means that one has a winsome personality and is human. These are assets, as much the gift of God as the power to sing; and they are usable in the great work of evangelism. But the minister who simply "glad-hands" the people, who makes that an end, and counts his work successful when he knows everybody, and when the people call him by his first name, but stops short of soul-winning, is a failure, no matter to how many lodges he

belongs, or how many special addresses and sermons he is asked to preach. No one has a better opportunity to be a real evangelist than the man who finds it easy to meet people, likes to mix with the crowd, and is welcomed by the crowd. He has an advantage over his less fortunate brother pastors which only adds to his responsibilities. Let him use his gifts as God ordained he should, and not as a means for attracting a personal following, or securing some added reputation or glory for himself. He must be an evangelist.

Some men are, by nature, optimists, while others are as naturally pessimists. Each needs to cultivate the faculty of seeing things as they are. One turns a telescope one way and the other turns it the other way; but neither sees things as they are. One will win in a sharp, short pastorate, while the other will probably never win any real success. But even these handicaps cannot, do not excuse any pastor from being a soul-winner.

What a blessing to the church and to the ministry are those pastors whom we call organizers! Some of them overdo it. Some of them effect such organization as no other man could run, and they so soon exhaust them-

selves attempting to run it that they must move on. But the sane, steady organizer is a blessing to the church. Not every man has that gift, and those who do not have it are handicapped and dependent upon others for such tasks. But there is a danger which organizers must avoid: they must not lose sight of the object to be attained by organization. Organization is not an end in itself; it is a means to an end. A machinist who would gather wheels, journals, belts, cogs and shafts and build them into a mighty structure, connect it with power, start it in motion, listen to the smooth hum of the moving mass, stand back with pride and shout, "See what I have built," when his machine could grind no grist, produce no product but motion, would be called a crank, or worse, a fool. An organization is not a success merely because it moves. It succeeds or fails according to the kind of product it produces, both as to its quality and quantity. Let us have more organizers among us, but let us not forget that to justify pride in it, the organization must result in winning and training souls for Christ and the church.

Can success as a financier justify a minister's

continuance in the pastorate, unless he also is an evangelist? No doubt we need his peculiar kind of work. Churches must be built, community houses, parsonages and other enterprises must be put through, benevolences raised, pastoral support brought to a more satisfactory level, and all this the financier does. Some pastors always leave a charge in splendid financial condition—bills paid, property in fine repair, benevolences advanced, and the pastor's salary increased, all of which counts tremendously. But all this is as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal unless souls are won for Christ and the church.

Finally, there is the mighty pulpiteer, the great preacher. Among us he is as a sort of prince. Rounded sentences, chaste diction, penetrating vision, brilliant imagination, unremitting labor, a musical voice, marshaled by a confident will, make him irresistible as a preacher. May the Lord increase his number, provided he aims his mighty cannon at the right target. It is an indisputable fact that some great pulpiteers are woeful failures as evangelists. They need not be failures at this point; they ought to win. If they will use their gifts humbly and for the end preaching

is meant to accomplish, they will win. One penitent at the altar after the sermon is higher compliment for the preacher and his sermon than a multitude pressing forward to compliment him with honeyed words. The first justifies preaching; the second is food for vanity.

I trust we are agreed, brothers, that whatever else a minister may do, and do well, to justify his being a pastor he must be an evangelist. There are pastors who are weak as revivalists. They cannot preach so-called evangelistic sermons; they cannot waken interest in the throng; they feel their need of help. Shall they get a professional evangelist to help them? Is it not better, if a pastor cannot win alone, that he get help and have a real revival, than struggle along alone? There may be men and circumstances which make it advisable to secure evangelistic help. The occasion is rare, and oftener than otherwise simply excuses the pastor from putting forth effort to win by some such method as he can use. I do not insist that every pastor can or should be a revival-meeting evangelist. To do that would imply that there is but the one method of being an evangelist, when in

fact there are several methods, some of them far better than the revival meeting. I do insist that every pastor must win souls, Christianize communities and put his converts to work for God and humanity. Other methods than the revival meeting will be discussed later. Just now I want to point out some dangers of professionalism.

We will go back to Rockwell charge, where in the previous chapter we left Brothers Bundy and Shanks considering the evangelistic campaign. A few days have passed and they meet again.

"Well, Pastor, have you decided what you think best about that evangelistic campaign?" this good layman asks.

"I'm not sure, but I think I would like to get Black and Kerr to help us. I have heard them so well spoken of, and they seem to have such splendid success everywhere, that I believe it would pay us to get them if we can. I have written to know if they can come, and am waiting to hear. Would you favor getting them if they can be secured at the right time?"

Again, in a brief moment, several things flash through Brother Shanks's mind.

"Why! I'm surprised. Brother Bundy is a good preacher, as good as any evangelist we can get. Why doesn't he hold his own revival? I wonder why he thinks of getting an evangelist. I had thought him big enough for his job. Wonder if he has just a few sermons and doesn't want to make more, or if he knows he can't hold out long."

Why is not an average layman justified in such thoughts when his pastor suggests getting evangelistic help? As a matter of fact, there is no question but that the pastor who asks for help, or willingly accepts it, often loses his grip to some extent on his people. At that most vital point he ceases to be their leader, and they must think either that he does not care to make the effort to lead, or knows he cannot lead to victory, which, in either case, causes them to distrust his leadership.

Brother Shanks, then, has flashed before him a memory which is not pleasant. Three years ago they brought in an evangelist who had been highly commended, and who came on reasonable terms, and they had expected great things from his coming. Five weeks before he arrived the pastor had received from him a mimeographed plan of organiza-

tion, such as he sent to every community about five weeks before he arrived on the scene. Accompanying the plan was a personal letter to the pastor. After general directions for putting on the organization, the letter had concluded about like this: "And now let me say, dear brother, that if you will follow my plan of organization exactly and with genuine devotion and enthusiasm, I can guarantee you a great revival; but if you fail in this, then everything will probably fail. The meeting will win or fail by what you do between now and the time I get there."

The pastor had seen Brother Shanks at that time, and they had talked over the entire plan and methods for putting it on. They agreed that if they were to have this gifted leader, they must follow his plans, and together they considered the first things to be done. Just as they were about to part the pastor had said: "I don't quite like this business. According to this letter, everything depends on our putting on this organization. If we fail, the revival fails and the blame is ours. When the meeting is over this organization will be worthless and we shall have to start all over again. Why, if we would de-

velop our own organization, with the same enthusiasm with which we are developing his, and if we would spend a little of what he will cost us to put on a campaign of our own, could we not do as well without him as with him?" and they had agreed on that point while going ahead with the prescribed organization.

They did their best in every way. The pastor gave five weeks to preparation, and so did his workers. The evangelist arrived and on Sunday morning opened the series with a succession of stories intended to arouse emotion and awaken enthusiasm, and concluded by telling the people about the plan which he had sent the pastor, and assured them that with this preparation there was no doubt of what the outcome would be. As he went home that day, Brother Shanks said to himself, "Well, the evangelist is safe any way. He has an alibi with the pastor, and also with the congregation. If the meeting wins, he did it; if it fails, our pastor and we are to blame. I hope it wins, but it will take different preaching than the kind he gave us this morning."

At the end of four weeks there had been

no stir, nothing accomplished. The evangelist had found some flaws in the preparatory work, and had pounced upon them caustically, ignoring the fact that at that point his plan of organization was absolutely unfitted for that community. But Sunday school Decision Day was to be held the last Sunday of his stay, and he was banking on that for results. No appreciable result occurring up to that time, on that day the children were brought in, the teachers with their classes, and they filled the central portion of the room. The evangelist preached a sermon in which were striking illustrations dealing with murder, black hearts, the horror of sin, the danger of hell, and at last the exhortation that all the children come and kneel at the altar to be saved from their sins and from hell. They were assured that they would be lost if they did not come. Teachers were exhorted and threatened with what would come to them if they did not bring all the members of their classes down to the altar. Of course they all came. The evangelist had a great time with them, counted them, reported it a great victory, and concluded with "Didn't I tell you we never fail?"

All this, as an unpleasant memory, went through Brother Shanks's mind in a brief moment. Who can blame him for his antagonism when his pastor suggested that they get an evangelist? Not all evangelists are like that one—not very many of them are—but there are enough of them to cause the average layman who loves his church uneasiness when evangelists are mentioned, and to raise the question whether the result likely to be gained is worth the risk. But Brother Shanks replied: "Well, I hardly know what to think, Pastor. I am not much in favor of getting an evangelist. I would much rather follow your leadership, work harder myself, and get the church to work with us. But if you think best, I'll follow your judgment. I shall stand by you, but be sure you are right before getting an evangelist."

Again they separated, and when he reached home Brother Bundy sat thinking for a long time. He considered several things of which a layman would probably not take account. He also had memories. There was that time, five years ago at Etta Springs, when evangelist Bulger had helped him. It had been a great meeting. Bulger was a fine preacher,

sane and careful in his methods, and had done good work. His only fault had been in the length of his sermons. They were so long that he carried his congregation beyond the point where easiest response could be secured, and when the crucial moment arrived, he failed to get the results he might have had thirty minutes earlier. He was too keen about completing his sermon, and not sufficiently in touch with his audience. But it had been a good meeting, and about sixty had signified their intention of uniting with the church.

His memory went back for a moment to the hour of eleven that last Sunday night. The meetings were over. Almost the entire congregation had gone to the station with the evangelist to see him off. He stood on the back platform of the Pullman waving his handkerchief, and the people stood watching the train pull away, waving in return. There were sixty converts to join the church next Sunday, and some of them were now watching their spiritual father leave them orphaned, and to the care of strangers. It was a distressing moment for them and for the pastor. The following day he had spent in his study with his records. He found that of the sixty

converts thirty were from the Sunday school Decision Day service, which would have yielded much the same results had Brother Bulger not been there. He found that of the remaining thirty-two or three, more than twenty had been converted in their homes or offices under the persuasion of their pastor. Only seven were directly the product of the meeting. He was greatly encouraged to find that, after all, most of the converts were his own children, and would naturally follow him as their leader.

Then his memory passed to the following years, when he had tried to keep those seven, and he was saddened to recall that although the members won by his own private efforts and from the Sunday school had remained true, more than half of the evangelist's converts had not been able to endure their orphaned estate and had fallen away. At last he had concluded that it is difficult for anyone else to care for new converts successfully other than the one who brought them to Christ. That accounts for the large number of revival accessions who fall away from faith and the church, particularly if the revival is led by a professional evangelist who leaves the same evening that the meetings close. The work of

evangelism can never end with the revival. When converts are secured, the work of saving them has just begun, whether the pastor or an evangelist has led the meeting. The danger in professionalism, however, lies in the fact that it is hard for a stranger to lead the new convert. He had been attracted by the evangelist, believes in him, is often half converted to him. When the pastor or a helper attempts to help him, he does not feel the inspiration the evangelist gave him, is listless and indifferent, resents the attempt of another to take the evangelist's place, and so falls away through no fault whatever save his own preference for his spiritual father.

Suddenly Brother Bundy sat upright, recalling another incident which occurred soon after the close of the meeting at Etta Springs. Each morning he had walked down the village street for his mail, and had usually stepped in at the place of business of his best and most beloved parishioner for a few moments' chat. One Monday morning, three weeks after the meetings had closed, he had stopped in as usual. No one else was around, and he and Moody, his Sunday school superintendent, had talked freely about the church work. A

quizzical look had come to his friend's eyes when they were about to part, as he smilingly said, "You don't seem to me to preach with as much punch as you did before the revival, Pastor. Are you tired, working too hard with the new converts, or am I just mistaken?" After a bit of chaff and joking they had separated, but the pastor carried away a pain in his heart. Never had he tried so hard in the pulpit to meet the needs of his people. Never had he so put his heart into his preaching. What was the matter? At last he knew. Brother Bulger had packed into a dozen sermons all he had thought, all he had read, all he had felt, all his faith and hope and experience. Out of a large fund of illustrative matter he had selected the best and had used it in a masterly way. He had been a masterly preacher. Brother Bundy had to prepare two sermons each week besides other talks and addresses, visited his people, conducted funeral services, managed the details of his church, never repeated illustrations, and the evangelist's visit had simply made his task much more difficult. That was it. The people missed Bulger. That is the reason there is so often a slump after a great evangelist has been

in a church for a time. That is the reason the pastor so often feels ill at ease when the evangelist is gone and his people wonder what has happened to his preaching.

Brethren, I do not believe in making any man's load lighter than it ought to be. We ministers are tempted almost beyond any other class of men to be lazy, to take life easy. No one demands our presence at the strike of a clock, except on Sundays and prayer-meeting nights. We can prepare our sermons when we will, and be our own masters more completely than most men. It is to our everlasting credit that there are not more lazy men among us. There are a few of whom we are ashamed, but they are only a few. On the other hand, there is no call to make our task harder than it normally is. To get a professional evangelist is not to make our task less but more difficult. We would be wiser to work a bit harder at our main task, winning converts, and to ease the burden at some other points.

And, finally, this question came with pounding force to Brother Bundy's mind: "Why have I thought or planned to get an evangelist? Am I afraid to trust God, or myself? No! Not that! Then am I afraid the people will

not follow me? That is a slander on the people. They would rather follow their pastor than anyone else. Am I lazy, and shrink from the responsibility of this work?" Just there Brother Bundy held a private prayer meeting, and then, in the light which such prayer meetings often bring, he faced himself and his task and came to a definite decision upon which he asked the blessing of God. He said to himself: "It was just the feeling that if I got a skilled, professional evangelist, it would be easier and a bit surer. I did shrink from undertaking the work alone. I was making a sort of refuge of the evangelist, excusing myself from that task by thinking I could get someone else to do it better and easier, and letting the people pay for it. I am not a great revivalist, and I am poor at exhortation, and an evangelist would probably get in some people I shall not be able to reach; but with the people supporting me, working with me, and with a frank acceptance of the whole responsibility I believe that it will be better to go on without the evangelist. I'll just write a letter to Black and Kerr this moment canceling the engagement. Next time I see Brother Shanks I'll tell him what I've decided and why, and

next Sunday I will begin preparation for the revival. I'm glad that's settled, and settled rightly."

Brother Bundy had really gone to the heart of the greatest danger in professionalism. Ministers are as human as any one. Heavy work distresses them, daunts them, just as it does others. Why do so many men hire their furnaces cared for? Surely not because they do not have time to do it. They would be better off if they did it themselves, for they need the exercise. They hire it done to get rid of an irksome chore. Why do many women keep maids? Because they have not the time or strength to care for their own homes? Certainly not! They do it in order that they may be free, have their liberty, get rid of disagreeable work. Ministers have the same impulse, and when there are professionals galore begging for a chance to come and take a heavy chore off their shoulders, it is not surprising that a good many use them. The chief danger is that the pastor may come. finally, to lack enthusiasm for the thing he can so easily turn over to another, and so cease entirely to be an evangelist.

I have been dealing with this subject as

though a revival meeting were the only way by which to do the work of an evangelist. There are successful pastor-evangelists who do not depend at all upon special meetings for their converts. The day ought never to come when Methodists will cease to hold special meetings; but the day has already come when Methodist ministers should not depend exclusively upon any kind of revival meeting for their converts. Every pastor can and must be an evangelist, but not every pastor can be a successful special meeting revivalist.

After this hour with himself and God, the pastor called Brother Shanks on the phone: "Hello! Brother Shanks? Lucky to get you the first thing. Say, I've been thinking over our conversation of this morning, and have made up my mind and hope you'll approve. I have written Black and Kerr that we have changed our plans and will not want them. I want that we should trust ourselves and God and go at it without an evangelist's help."

Then for a few moments there was eager response from the other end of the telephone, and from the expression of pleasure, mingled with surprise, on the pastor's face one could guess very accurately what was being said.

After all, when a man has taken up his cross, or accepted his task, to have good men say that they believe he can win, and that he can count on their support, gladdens the heart and makes effort to the limit of power and endurance a delight.

CHAPTER III

THE EVANGELISTIC MESSAGE

In considering the evangelistic message, the reader may understand me to be referring either to the message from the pulpit, called a sermon, or to the personal appeal made to a single individual. What may be properly called an evangelistic message? I am not to deal so much with the subject-matter of the sermon as with the method and aim, or the use to which such matter shall be put. Some ministers are able to turn a very clean-cut discussion of the philosophy of prayer to account as an evangelistic appeal, while others with such a subject will flounder, get lost, or be merely coldly logical. Phillips Brooks could make any subject serve evangelistic ends. Jonathan Edwards thundered the law and threatened doom in such terms as would empty a church in these days, but with such spirit that he made himself the greatest evangelist New England has ever produced. I propose just now that we shall think more about the

character of the message, its soul, its intent and spirit, than of its substance.

In the first place, then, it will be a persuasive message. "Vengeance belongeth unto me, saith the Lord," notwithstanding the fact that some ministers indicate by the spirit of their preaching that he has turned the job of exacting retribution over to them. It is God who will "hew to the line and lay judgment to the plummet," though the thundering invective and bitter denunciation indulged in by some men in the pulpit might indicate that they have ascended to the seat of judgment.

It is said that after Sam Jones had been holding a meeting for about a week in a Southern city where he was well known, one evening he said in his quaint way: "I've been here about a week now, and I've found out a lot of things about you folks that I'm going to tell you to-night. Fact is, I'm just naturally going to take your hide off, salt it, and hang it up to dry. If any of you want to get out, why now's the time to go before I begin. If you start in, you must stay through." Everybody laughed, thought it a good joke, and stayed to hear what he had to say. Mr. Jones did say frequently some very plain and em-

phatic things in his original way which awakened merriment and conviction and did good. A young Methodist minister from up country was there that night and thought it was truly wonderful. He went home and next Sunday morning when he got up to preach he said, very solemnly—and he was noted for his sincerity and solemnity—"I've been your pastor now about two years, and during that time I've learned a good deal about you, much of it not to your credit. This morning I'm just naturally going to take the hide off the last one of you, salt it, and hang it up to dry. If any of you don't want to see it done, you had better leave right now." Knowing him and his lack of humor, the people simply got up and went home. The difference was that Sam Jones said things like that with a loving pat on the shoulder, and there was no spleen in it, while the young man up country felt that he was called to take the work of retribution out of the hands of the Lord and attend to it himself.

I recently heard Dr. George B. Dean, Superintendent of the Department of Evangelism of the Board of Home Missions and Church Extension of the Methodist Episcopal Church,

say that he likes to hear a church organ when a strain of some familiar tune or hymn runs through the music. Let the organ roar, rumble, whisper, laugh, or weep, but always let him hear "Home, Sweet Home," "I need thee every hour," or "Nearer, my God, to thee" flashing like sunlight through it all. He then said that in exactly the same way, the quality of persuasiveness should run through every sermon. His taste in music may not be above question, but surely his judgment of what constitutes real preaching is sound. When our Lord called us to the ministry he did not commission us to take a club, a baseball bat, a flaying knife, and go into the world to condemn and punish every creature. Rather he commissioned each of us to say, "I beseech you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." We must denounce sin without hating the sinner; we must warn the sinner and yet make him feel that we love him; we must declare the truth about sin and righteousness, but with tenderness of heart and voice, and without malice or rancor.

A good story is told of one of Methodism's great scholars, a teacher in one of our theological seminaries. Having scholarly instincts and

accustomed himself to delve deep after truth, he is not given in his lectures to much ornamentation. He seems to think that students will be delighted to get the simple truth without adornment. His classes sometimes delight to get him off on a tanget, both to get light on a side question, and to relieve their minds from the tremendous task of following him in deep places. He is lovingly called "Uncle Henry" by his hundreds of friends and admirers. One day when the class was exhausted in the attempt to keep pace with him, and on the heels of a philosophical statement on the subject of retribution, some one asked, "Doctor, should we ever preach on hell?"

There was a moment's hesitation. Then "Uncle Henry" slowly removed his glasses, looked leisurely around the room, and replied with more fervor than usual, "Yes, young men. Preach on hell, after you have wept all night the night before."

Too many, when preaching on hell, indicate that they are glad there is such a place, and that knowing some people who should go there and having authority to put them there, they purpose to make a good job of it. Hell ought to be thought of with horror. The

evangelistic pastor will think of it as a place of doom to which he *fears* some of those to whom he speaks will fall. He sees the place vividly, but with no delight. He sees the people on one hand, tempted, weak, blind, and hell on the other, while he himself stands between, commissioned to keep as many as possible from coming even near the brink of it. He feels his responsibility and the danger of the people, but he knows that he cannot force them back. He must persuade them, beseech them to keep at a safe distance. Before he preaches on hell he ought to "weep all the night before."

An evangelistic message will be well prepared. It is a mistake for any pastor to feel that he can prepare his sermon for each evening day by day during the revival. That is where the evangelist has the advantage over most pastors. He has a definite series of sermons into which he has put his best thought and effort. He may not be much of a preacher, but the best there is of him he has put into those sermons. If a pastor purposes to conduct special meetings each year, why should he not begin early in the year, select a series of themes for his meeting, study them, prepare them with

great care, write them out and pray over them until they literally saturate his soul, and then go to his task? He will not then be at such a disadvantage with the professional. If it is urged that such an arrangement does not give the Holy Spirit opportunity to guide in the choice of themes, or the use of incidents in the meetings as illustrative matter, I reply that the Holy Spirit can see further than half a day ahead, and that such latitude in preparation may be allowed as will make it possible to enforce the lessons of the meeting, just as the evangelist himself might do. One reason, it seems to me, why evangelistic services conducted by the pastor have lost their swing, and that professionals have come in, is in the fact that pastors do not make such preparation as they should. In the old camp-meeting days, every preacher brought out his greatest sermons and preached them over and over again. They were well prepared, and the preacher had victory before he began to preach.

That brings me to the second step in the preparation of evangelistic sermons. It involves the preparation of the preacher himself. In my youth I often attended the sessions of Gregory Presbytery of the Cumberland Presby-

terian Church, and always expected Dr. Proctor to preach a great sermon on the Sunday morning of the session. I shall never forget his sermon at Archer City, in 1892. I do not recall his text, or much that he said, but I do recall that I saw the waters of the fountain for sin and uncleanness, "which was opened in the house of King David," go flowing by that day. I saw the people go and bathe in its waters; I went with them, and came away with shouts in my heart. It was a wonderful sermon and a wonderful day.

Later, when I was about to be installed as pastor of a little church in Henrietta, Texas, I wanted Dr. Proctor to preach the sermon, and my own grandfather to deliver the charge. It was a beautiful day and the people were expectant. But Dr. Proctor preached a poor, crippled sermon with no soul in it. I heard him frequently after that, but never heard him preach as he always did at Presbytery. Finally I became well acquainted with him, and with the daring of a young cub, I asked him one day, "Dr. Proctor, please tell me why it is that at Presbytery you always preach such a wonderful sermon, and at other times you do not get along so well."

After a moment's hesitation he replied, "Well, I always know I am to preach at Presbytery, and I get ready for it, I don't mean that I prepare a sermon. Of course I do that, I get the sermon ready weeks ahead of time; but then I get myself ready. I know who will be there, and I think about the ministers, their families, their hardships, hopes, needs; and one after another I take them to the Lord in prayer, each time asking that I may be used in that sermon to help them. Then I take up the church where the service will be held, and 'pray through' for that. When I go to the pulpit at last I simply open my heart and the sermon comes through it from my head. At other times I do not know the people, have not prepared myself to serve them, and my preaching is pretty dry."

For twenty-five years this method of preparation for the pulpit has been in my mind, and now I pass it on to you and commend it to every one of you who sincerely wishes to be an evangelist. Prepare your sermon early, then leave time for the preparation of yourself. To keep his own private skies clear is not the final preparation of the preacher; he must be in touch with his people, know their needs,

feel their needs, and be determined to supply the agency through which divine grace may meet them.

Briefly, then, all this implies that evangelistic preaching must be definitely personal. It must meet the needs of individuals in their efforts to be good; it must fit power to need; it must awaken individual hope and confidence, and lead to personal faith. The logical settlement of all philosophical questions to the satisfaction of every hearer will not so surely accomplish this end as the personal testimony of one heart to another, followed by the appeal, with the emphasis upon the "thou" which Moses made to Jethro, "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good."

The evangelistic message must be unmistakably positive. In an Oklahoma town where I was pastor many years ago, one Monday morning the leading man of the community called me into his office. He had been reared a Methodist, but was attending another church with his wife. I was very young, and having been in the community only a few weeks, felt much awed in the presence of the great man who had never spoken to me before, and wondered what he could want with me. As soon

as we were seated, he asked: "Mr. Wagner, do you believe anything? and if you do believe something, do you preach it?"

I was startled. My mind was a blank for a moment. Then I gathered enough wit to reply: "Why, certainly I do, sir. I surely would not preach what I do not believe."

"Of course not. But do you believe anything is positively true, and do you preach that? This is why I ask. For over a year the minister where I worship has been telling us that Moses did not write the Pentateuch; that Job never lived; that Jonah was never really swallowed by a whale; that Isaiah was written by a number of different men, and that much in the book usually looked upon as prophecy is really history; that probably most of the miracles mentioned in the New Testament are no more miracles than familiar events which take place in our own time. He preaches what he believes, but he believes much more intensely that many things are untrue than that anything is actually true. I want to know what is true, not what is not true. I am sixty-odd years of age. All my life I have had to fight doubt. What little faith I have left, given me by my Methodist mother, is my most

precious possession. I need help to keep it, not stimulus for my doubts. I want to hear a minister stand up and say, as though thrilled by the truth of it, that this is true and the other thing is true, because he has tried it out and knows. I can think up enough doubts, find enough of them in the magazines and books I read, without having them hurled at me from the pulpit. Now, young man, if you preach anything positive, I'm coming to hear you. But for God's sake don't help the devil —if there is a devil—to finish his work in me, by making me lose faith in everything my mother taught me about religion."

There were tears in the old man's eyes when he finished. He had asked for help to escape the destruction the pulpit was working in his soul. Let no minister, however erudite, imagine that he is building the souls of men when he is preaching negations. We must be builders. If our people are cherishing empty hopes, holding to dead faiths, let us give them positive, reasonable hopes and living faith. Quickened by these, they will clear away the rubbish of mistake and error without our help. How quickly one will move out of an old house into a new, after the new one is

built and offered him, and he is able to compare the new with the old! But begin to tear down the old house about his head, before he even knows that a new one is to be built, and you lose the opportunity to build for him a new house. I do not fear destructive criticism; let us welcome it where it belongs—in the study of the scholar. But when it has demolished something, let us not begin immediately to call the attention of our people to that fact. Let us, rather, wait until constructive criticism has furnished something to take its place, has built a new and better house, and then without condemning the old, let us invite our people into the new house. They will discard the old quickly enough. Evangelistic preaching must be positive preaching.

We ministers may have our own troubles with doubts in the field of philosophy. If we think, we shall have doubts, and we will struggle with them manfully. But to win, as preachers, we must believe some things with abandon. We must not be vague or driven about by every wind of doctrine. There must be eternal rock under our feet; we must build our houses upon that rock. It is an omen for good that

positive faith among us is stronger to-day than it was yesterday. Never were our schools of theology so positive in their teaching, or so worthy of our earnest support. They are building, and they are turning out builders. It was not always so. Not many years ago the students of an Eastern seminary were discussing matters of devotion. One young man remarked that he did not believe people prayed enough for students, particularly for theological students, and that he wished some one would write a good prayer for such students for the people to study. He thought that a production of that kind might stimulate the people to such prayer. Every such group has at least one wag in it, and the wag of this group saw his opportunity and remarked: "Why, don't you know there is such a prayer, suitable for us? It is in the Prayer Book of the Protestant Episcopal Church, and is entitled 'Prayer for those at sea'!" The laugh that followed was good-natured, but the wag had struck at a very grave danger among preachers. We must not be "at sea" in our spiritual sailing.

Evangelistic preaching must link people up together in proper social contact. There is no

place for the cloister, the hermit, in our times, and what we preach will find its test and prove its right to live in the effect it has upon the social contacts of the people. We must live together and we must live in peace. Religion must bring peace among men by making them peaceable. And peaceable men must be so organized and related one to the other that the peace within them may have opportunity to bear its normal and legitimate fruit. Two men, each with a peaceable mind, may be brought into conflict by an impossible social order. While this is not the place to discuss a Christian social order, it must be said that evangelistic preaching has for its aim the saving of both men and the social organization in which they live.

Evangelistic preaching must dig down and deal with the motives of life, seek out the will and bring it into subjection to God's will. Culture has its place in the work of the church, and it is a large and honorable place. If by that term culture of the heart is meant, then it includes all of religion. But if we mean merely polish, adornment of conduct, gentility of manners, then evangelism must dig beneath such veneer and plow deep in the heart. Mo-

tives are spiritual; ideals are spiritual; faith is spiritual; our message must be spiritual. It must seek to sanctify motive, to Christianize ideals and to anchor faith in God through Jesus Christ. Such is the character of the evangelistic appeal.

CHAPTER IV

THE REVIVAL MEETING

Revival meetings are of comparatively modern origin. I cannot find that they are commanded by the apostles. True we read in Ephesians 4. 11 that "he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers—that is the order in which they are given, and suggests that it is the order of their importance. But in the Scriptures a prophet is a preacher; an evangelist a missionary, establishing the church where it did not exist; pastors care for the moral and social welfare of the people, and teachers fill the same office as at present. There is no warrant here for either revival meetings or modern evangelists, except such as Bishops Thoburn and Bashford and Lewis. Philip was such an evangelist, or missionary, but from him to modern evangelists is a long cry, just as there is a wide difference between

his method of work with a community or a single soul and modern revival meetings.

John Wesley was an evangelist in a land where the Established Church was dull and dead. But John Wesley conducted nothing comparable to modern revivals, and used nothing like their methods. He did preach in the coal pits, on the streets and by the roadside, and on occasion preached two or three times a day for two or three days in succession at the same place. But this was usually in communities where no class had been formed and where no pastor was located, in order to open the way for such organization.

Students of early American Methodism are fond of saying that our fathers were compelled to organize a new American church in order that they and their neighbors might have such means of grace as the sacraments, and the privilege of calling their spiritual leaders "pastors." It is said that at the close of the Revolutionary War there were entire colonies with scarcely an ordained minister in them. Necessity, "the mother of invention," called forth the Methodist Episcopal Church.

In those days great circuits, requiring from four to eight weeks to travel, were the rule.

As late as 1860, along the Mississippi River and westward, there were still such circuits. There were few church buildings, and not enough ministers to reach their appointments more than once in several weeks. At the best, from six to a dozen sermons annually was about all the service the people could expect. Again something had to be done, and necessity "invented" the camp meeting. What was more natural, since the ministers could not take the gospel to the people, than that the people should come to the ministers? A camping place was selected at a point convenient to several communities, and the people came from the country round for a week or ten days of spiritual feasting. The movement caught the imagination of ministers and people of the entire country, and the camp meeting was soon looked upon as the means ordained of God for the saving of the world.

But the country developed, communities grew larger, places of worship were built, ministers became more numerous, Sunday schools were organized, and, finally, anyone could hear if he cared to from one to three sermons each week. The necessity which "invented" the camp meeting was gone, and with it went the

"invention." Its departure was slow and painful. There are not lacking even to-day those who believe that their going was due to the deadness and lack of spirituality in the church.

But before the camp meeting was entirely abandoned, and because the people did not care to leave their homes to attend them, or did not feel the need of such attendance, pastors began holding special series of meetings, patterned after the camp meeting, at a convenient time in their local churches. The revival meeting, then, is a child of the camp meeting, and in its modern phases does not date its origin prior to that institution. It is a miniature camp meeting and came forth to take its place. Its roots are not in the foundations of the gospel, but in the needs of an age and social order. It is no more reasonable to assume that people not given to revival meetings of the evangelistic type are not spiritual than that they are not spiritual who do not attend a camp meeting. There is nothing either in history or the Bible to make such meetings the only, or chief, evangelistic agency of the church. There is much in both reason and history to commend other methods and

means, some of which are discussed in these pages.

Along with the camp meeting there arose mighty men of striking personality and ability, as such meetings must have for their leadership. Not every minister could be a successful camp meeting preacher. Equally, revival meetings require special personality and mental equipment. Some pastors can never be successful revival meeting evangelists. Such meetings demand a peculiar power of exhortation not possessed by most men. I recall an experience of my own which began as a sort of nightmare, but turned into a blessed benediction. I was immature as a minister, but had been asked to help in the revival at the old home church where my grandfather had preached until, broken in health, he had been succeeded by his son. My uncle had asked me to help him. I began preaching on Sunday morning, and we held services twice each day. Friday came, and I perceived conviction in the large audience and believed it was time to "cast the net." After preaching that evening with what unction I possessed, I asked for penitents to come to the "mourners' bench." With all my soul I longed to see them come,

and I exhorted with ringing voice and sincere urgency, while the audience sang through a long hymn. I felt that the people were moved, that they were ready to act, but no one came forward. I was about to give up when I felt a gentle touch on my arm, and turned to see grandfather standing by my side. What an old-time giant he was! And how I had admired him in the days of his strength! He was seventy-five years old at this time, and emaciated with the ailment which took him "up higher" the next year. Tall of form, spare of frame, with long beard, piercing eyes, and hair scarcely turned gray, he stood and said, "Son, let me try." He was like a "great rock in a weary land," for I knew that if God would give him voice and strength he would sweep that audience to the altar. I do not recall what he said. I dare say it was much the same as I had said. I do recall how he said it. At first deliberate and low of voice, within two minutes every word could have been heard through the block. His eyes were bright, his shoulders thrown back, and the spirit of an old charger was in him as he pleaded with men to give their souls a chance. Aware of his failing strength, and knowing that within

five minutes after he began to speak he would be shaken with paroxysms of coughing, he began the sooner to call them to the altar. And they came and came until the altar was filled with scores of seekers. It was a great service. I have heard since then the greatest preachers in America, and have been thrilled by their eloquence. I have even tried to pattern after some of them in the matter of sermon building, and to obey the exhortations of others. But I should prefer to-day, had I my choice, to listen to such an exhortation as I heard that night than to hear the greatest preacher in the land. Possibly it would not produce the same results as then; the day for such things may be past. It probably is. But if we are to do for our generation what the preachers of that day did for theirs, we must find some method that we can use as effectively in the present as they found and developed in the past.

I started to say that modern evangelists have sprung up because of the demand for specialists who can succeed in revival meetings. The modern evangelist is the product of the necessity of the revival meeting for a leader. His calling arose out of the revival

meeting. When the church discovers that the revival is merely a bridge between the old-time camp meeting and the day when we shall get back to the evangelism of settled conditions and a church working steadily the year around, the need for the special evangelist will have passed, and he will return to the pastorate. He has filled an important place among us, has done great service, but it is time for pastors to take up and carry their own burdens, and to cease to depend upon others to do it for them. Probably the chief weakness of modern church activity has been the dependence of many pastors upon the revival specialist to attend in a very short time to the church's evangelistic obligations, and thus free themselves from duties for which they fancied they were not qualified.

There is a place, however, a vital place, in our church life and work for the special meeting, the revival. It will be a sad day for the church when the pastors no more announce the day for such a meeting. The ministry of the revival has been twofold. It has been the means of warming up the church and of focusing attention on the work of evangelism; it has held the church to its chief

mission and made the world aware that the church was at its task, and by means of it many have been saved.

For reasons I need not now discuss, revivals are not as successful as they formerly were. The pastor who depends upon a revival meeting for his recruits for church membership, or for fulfilling the mission of the gospel to save souls, finds that few of his own people attend the services, while the unconverted are conspicuously absent. After many disappointments in such efforts, he is beginning to seek out a method better suited to his day, that will accomplish genuine results.

It is well, however, to hold revival services at least once each year. Such meetings serve as a climax toward which a pastor may focus his year's work, and should be a time of rejoicing. There is something peculiarly inspiring in the spectacle of a people coming together night after night for the worship of God. The church which will not do this for at least a week each year is indeed at a low spiritual level. In most communities the revival is not, however, the best means for arousing such a church in these times. In the chapter on "An Evangelistic Program" a better method

will be discussed. The mission of the revival of the future will be to do for the laymen what institutes and conventions do for ministers. It will be a time for spontaneous praise and rejoicing, but more particularly for learning how better to do the work of the church.

The time set for the revival should be announced early in the year, and the activities of the year focused upon it as a climax for every undertaking. Like Commencement Day, like the parade at the end of the war, like Thanksgiving Day at the end of harvest, the revival should signalize achievement, and there should not lack hard work to provide something over which to rejoice. If a revival breaks out during the year, it only proves that the work looking toward victory is being well done; but it is fatal idly to wait, depending upon a revival breaking out. Usually unlooked-for revivals occur not where the church is simply waiting for them, but where it is working faithfully with a revival in view but set for some later day. Do not leave the revival date unfixed. If a farmer could plant corn at any time in the year, how different would be his work! Because he must plant within a period of about two weeks, he is ready for it

when the time comes. Lack of fixed dates and purposes and program make the work of many ministers correspondingly vague and uncertain. Set the revival date and then do the work necessary before that date arrives, and the revival will come in truth.

Let the pastor lead his own revival. Why, in this hour of rejoicing over victory, should another take his place? If he has led his church to victory, let him march at the head of the procession in the great parade. Let him not depend upon the revival for his converts, but make it a time of rejoicing over them, and it will be easy for him to be the leader.

Do not plan for too extended a period of revival. Such efforts are a weariness to flesh and spirit. A week may be sufficient; two weeks certainly will be. If a church has worked faithfully throughout the year, if it has accomplished anything, then it should not require a protracted period to arrive at a climax and rejoice over it.

The same suggestion may be made with reference to the length of each service in the series. Because people will go to a theater and sit for three hours with apparent delight,

is no argument that the same people, or even deeply spiritual people who may never attend a theater, ought to sit for an equal length of time and with equal pleasure in a religious service. A theater is a place of amusement, of diversion, where one laughs, relaxes, takes his ease. A religious service is or should be tense, demanding close attention, and often stirring deep emotion. It is not a time of relaxation but of high endeavor. As well say that if one can sit in a theater three hours, one can run swiftly for three hours, as that one should enjoy a church service for that length of time. The only way any normal person could enjoy so long a service would be to sleep through it. An hour is sufficiently long for most services, and no service should continue beyond an hour and a half. An hour packed full and at high tide will be far better than an hour and a half with the same content, but at lower pressure and of diminishing interest. The service should close at its climax.

This is as good a time as any to say that an entire evening of such a revival can well be given to praise and testimony; to reports of personal workers regarding their joy in service; to reports from the Sunday school

superintendent, Epworth League president, and presidents of the Ladies' Aid, Woman's Foreign and Woman's Home Missionary Societies. Another evening could be given up to the official board, to discuss the program of the church, what its aims for the year just closing have been, what its objectives for the next year are to be, the financial situation, or other urgent problems.

An entire evening could be given up to the study of hymns and the Hymnal. A hymn might be read, studied briefly, anecdotes about it told, its music explained, and then the hymn sung through, and repeated [3] until it is mastered. In this way about five or six hymns could be studied in an evening. Two evenings in a revival could easily be spent in this way greatly to the profit of the church. If the pastor can sing, he should conduct this service. An evening could be devoted to the new converts and those who had joined the church during the year; and still another evening could be occupied with an open discussion of the meaning of church membership, the nature of the church vows, the value of church ritual, and similar questions. By following this course and using some inventive genius in

selecting additional subjects for other evenings, the revival period can be made a season of real ministry to the church, to be appreciated and used accordingly.

As in other services of the church, conversions will be expected and sought in the revival, though that will not be its chief object. That will be a by-product rather than the chief result of such an undertaking. Evangelism must be made the supreme business of the church the year around, and that cannot be done so long as it is supposed that a revival will accomplish a year's work within a period of two or three weeks. It would be a blessing to the entire church if pastors and churches would agree to employ the revival especially for purposes of spiritual culture, and to do the work of evangelism in the regular services of the church throughout the year.

CHAPTER V

PERSONAL EVANGELISM

I RECENTLY heard a well-known Methodist minister say, "My mother's hands upon me had much more to do with making a minister of me than the hands of any bishop." Go back to the beginning of Christian experience in your own life and you will find some individual to have been the direct agent of God in your salvation. Even those of us who were converted at the altar in an old-time revival, if we think it over, will recall some person who brought us there, or helped us to faith after we took that step.

A few years ago Dr. J. O. Peck wrote that if to save his own soul he must win a thousand converts in two years, and might choose one method only in which to work, he would unhesitatingly choose the method of personal appeal to individuals one by one. And Dr. Peck was a great preacher. Bishop L. J. Birney, formerly dean of Boston University School of Theology, said recently to a group

of New England pastors: "If twelve of us will band ourselves together to win one person to Christian experience this year, and so to train him that in turn next year he shall win another and likewise train him, so that the next year he shall win still another and train him, and so on for twenty-seven years, each of us and our converts keeping up the record year by year, there would not remain an unconverted or untrained individual on earth. No one of us would have saved more than one individual in an entire year, but the world would be saved."

The real problem of evangelism is to get Christians, all Christians, at work at it. Evangelistic preaching must have for its aim the conversion of sinners, and the stimulating of believers to evangelistic effort for one soul at a time. Some one has said that evangelism is "Christian salesmanship," and that "we need more salesmen as well as better salesmen." Too long the preaching and revival-meeting method have been our chief agencies for such salesmanship, and the time has come for singling men out and winning them one by one. Laymen must engage in the task, but pastors must stimulate them to it, and no pastor can send others to do what he is not doing himself.

I am speaking to pastors, and, my brothers, you must practice personal evangelism; you must win men one at a time.

The personal method is not the easiest method. The sermon method, for ministers, at least, is the easiest. In fact, is there anything in the world so exhilarating, so perfectly thrilling, as preaching? We ministers know, even if some of our hearers do not, how exhilarating preaching is. There is exhilaration for the preacher in the preparation of a sermon. I enjoy hunting and fishing. Think of a trout stream in June! The trout are there without doubt, but they are not striking your flies. You stand back in the shadows, keep quiet a while, change your flies, test your leader, try again, cast after cast. Not a rise. You wander off up stream, change flies again, try other pools, but finally come back to that best pool you have seen. You creep on hands and knees. You dare not breathe a full breath, nor let your shadow strike the water. You do not disturb the grass or a bush along the stream's margin. Again you cast a perfect cast at exactly the right spot, below foamy waters where the current flows on again beyond a great bowlder. This time there is a strike, a

stout jerk and then a steady pull, and you forget everything else and just fight.

But now, let us say, it is Tuesday, or Monday evening, and next Sunday you are to stand up before a hundred or more men and women and try to catch one of them for God. What bait will attract them? No man is dull and sleepy with his fly book in his hand and a pool before him. No man ought to be dull and listless with his Bible in his hand and the people in his imagination. To get a sermon, to feel confident that you have the right one because you have consulted the highest authority about it, and that this sermon will prove to be the cast which will lure the soul by the fisherman's art, is thrilling beyond words.

But again it is Sunday morning. The sermon was finished long ago and lies back there in the study and down in the minister's brain and heart. With the assurance of orders from Headquarters, he has come into his pulpit. There are three hundred people before him, all there to hear him and offering him a sportsman's chance to make a catch that day. They have sung a hymn, the preliminary service is over, and the preacher is in his pulpit, his throne, and all eyes are upon him,

all ears open to him. What is the excitement of the trout fisherman compared with this thrilling moment? He is not alone. God is with him. His voice rings out, and God is in it to enforce the message. Yonder is a haggard face; over here a serene one with heart ready for service; and there a perplexed one, revealing some great problem to be settled. There are little children whose confidence the minister has held and still holds, young people with wonder in their eyes as they look out on the untried way of life, old people with the mists of evening in their eyes as they approach the time for evening devotions and well-earned rest, strong men whose minds need temporary deliverance from business cares, women who need a glance into calm skies after the turmoil of a week of household drudgery, and the minister stands there with those needs before him. Open your lips, you herald of good news to a world in need, and speak with assurance! What if your knees tremble, your hands shake and your voice is vibrant with emotion? It it time to make your cast, and this time you shall land your catch! Who does not thrill at such work? We sometimes talk about ministers having a hard time, but they who

say such things know nothing about the exhilaration of preaching. If only one could live on such pay, that alone would be sufficient compensation for being a preacher.

Personal evangelism, on the contrary, is never easy. It is delicate and difficult work. It is so personal, deals with such intimacies and secret depths of the soul, that one must have a holy daring, a blessed effrontery, almost a fearless audacity, to engage in it. It is never practiced accidentally. One does not drift into it. Deliberate choice alone leads to this kind of work, and in that choice is the spirit of sacrificial service. If it is not your practice to do this kind of work, now is a good moment in which to begin cultivating it. After one has practiced personal evangelism for years, he may find unexpected opportunities for immediate victories, but usually he will select the object of his endeavor, lay siege to him and labor long for success. In fifteen years of this kind of work, I have brought in twenty-five after whom I deliberately went out, to every one whom I succeeded in winning without planning my campaign.

Begin by deciding to go at it, and make the decision irrevocable. Then get out your church

constituency list, and make up a smaller list of not more than six or eight whom you will make your immediate prospects. Write their names in your address book. Then make another longer list of more remote prospects and, on winning one of the first list, immediately transfer a name from this second list to take his place. Always keep a half dozen on the smaller list. Now, do not rush out and tell those whose names you have on your list that you have decided to win them to the Christian life. Do not immediately tell anyone but God. Begin at once to work out a plan of campaign. First study your prospects, get well acquainted with them, and do not let them become suspicious that you are planning to preach to them in private. Let them feel at ease with you, so that you may get deep into their secret hearts.

This lesson was forcibly impressed upon me a few years ago. I was greatly flattered because a gentleman in my community, who did not belong to my church or congregation, but was an earnest worker in another church, sought opportunity on every occasion to ride or walk with me. We talked on every subject, discussed our churches, the business world, the

war, everything in general. Six months went by, and then one evening this man called me to the phone and said, "Doctor, I want to come over and have a chat with you this evening. Will you be at home?"

"Sure! Come right over. Glad to see you."

"Well, Doctor," he said, "I must tell you before I come that I want to talk to you about life insurance. You may not know it, but I am the champion life insurance agent of Boston."

And because he had been such a gentleman, though I had long before decided I should take out no more life insurance, I told him to come over. My pride suffered a bit, as I awaited his arrival, for I saw that I had been not so much a friend sought as a prospect studied. Though I had fortified myself against his every argument before he arrived, because he knew me so thoroughly he came very near to writing me for five thousand dollars of insurance. If a life insurance agent can devote six months of careful study to a prospect who at most will bring him only a few dollars, what ought we to do who capture men's souls for eternity?

Study your prospect. Study him a long time, if necessary, and do not lose him by

allowing your enthusiasm to run away with you. Speak only when you feel sure you are ready to speak. Then do not employ any deception. Be as frank as the insurance agent was with me. Give your friend an opportunity to prevent the interview if he chooses to do so. Not in one case in a thousand will he avoid it. Rather he will welcome it, since he has come to know you as thoroughly as you know him.

Here is a case in point. A few years ago a carpenter attended my church occasionally, whose wife attended regularly and desired to unite with us but thought best to wait for her husband. That was a challenge to me. His name went down on my small list of prospects. For three months, at least once a week, I either rode or walked with him to or from his work, and we became good friends. I had learned the carpenter's trade, so that we had much in common. Finally I thought I knew him and the point of easiest approach. Early one morning I called him up and said, "John, I want to call at your house to-morrow evening, if you'll be at home, and have a real talk with you. I want to do my duty by you as your pastor, and help you to Christian faith. How about it? May I come?"

For a moment there was a little stammering. But I had been square with him, had been his friend and he mine, and I had shown that I would not force the subject of religion upon him without his consent. I knew he would not deny me, and that if he consented to my visit it was equivalent to an invitation to help him become a Christian. So he finally said with hearty sincerity, "Why, sure, Pastor. Come right over and I'll be here. Guess it's about time somebody lined me up, and I'd prefer that it should be you."

An hour later John's wife called up Mrs. Wagner and told her that I was to call at their house that evening, and asked her to come with me, for both of us to come early and have supper with them. Of course she accepted. It was a fine supper, and Mrs. Wagner, who knows how to do team work, insisted when it was over that they immediately clear the table and wash the dishes. That left John and me alone, and we wasted no time. I knew what his excuses might be and how to get at his heart, for I knew most of his life story. I had learned it in our rides and walks together. Soon the barriers were all down and tears filled his eyes. We had just prayed

through as the women came in from the other room, and he arose with that light in his face which shines only out of a heart that has found God, and with trembling voice said: "Bertha, I—I have just been converted, and I want to join the church. Won't you join with me?" It does me good yet to recall her glad cry as her arms went round his neck. There was little said for a while, and then Bertha exclaimed, "John, I have been waiting for you to join the church ever since we were married, and I was almost giving up."

He had not been baptized. We telephoned for a number of his friends to come in, and an hour or so later, there in his home I baptized him and took him into the church on probation. I like to do that—lead a man to Christ at his own home altar, baptize him there, and then say to him, "Now you have a family altar. I hope you will never give it up but will pray here with your family every day." I am confident that John would not be in the church now if I had depended on my preaching to get him there, or if I had not taken time to study him before I tried to win him.

One summer, over in the Adirondacks, I fished a trout pool many mornings for a great

old trout which lay in deep water under the bank. I knew he was there, for I had seen him on several occasions. For two weeks every day but Sunday I tempted him with every lure and device known to the fisherman's art, and never so much as secured a rise from him. Then I decided to spend a day studying him. At earliest dawn I crept noiselessly to the bank above his lair, shaded my eyes and waited. An hour passed, two hours, and nothing happened. Slowly the sun rose; still there was no movement. The stream came into the pool over shallow ripples only a few yards above me. Growing weary of my fruitless gazing into the deep water, just after sunrise I glanced up at the ripples, and saw a small trout, apparently in distress, hurt in some way, feebly attempting to swim against the current. I was wondering if some fishermen had hooked the little fellow and then thrown him back as under size, when like a flash the old king of the pool darted through the water, snapped up the struggling fingerling, and as quickly darted back to his lair. My breath stopped and cold sweat stood on my forehead as, upon my discovery, I backed carefully away from the bank.

At a safe distance I breathed again and berated the old cannibal. I was so excited I could hardly keep my fingers steady as I arranged my tackle to whip a shallow place some distance below where I was sure to hook a small trout. In twenty minutes I had him. In three more I had changed leaders, had on a stout hook with my small trout, still very much alive, tied securely to it by a bit of silk thread, and flung him in the water up stream among the ripples. How my pulse jumped as I led my bait down through the ripples to the deeper water. Darting this way and that but unable to escape, it made a desperate fight. I did not have to wait long. Through the grass I saw a flash as the old cannibal responded to the lure. I slacked line and reel, let him take his prize back into his den with him so that he would get hook and bait deep into his gullet. Then I gave a slight snap and the fight was on. And such a fight it was! It ended with the great trout lying on the grass at my feet quivering his last. He had rebuffed me many times, laughed at me, ridiculed me, insulted me, but I had not given him up until he was mine. I studied him, dreamed about him, found out his secret

and landed him. Shall I not use as much sagacity and persistence in dealing with men?

How many experiences of this sort I recall, only they were in catching men instead of trout! For example, there was Donald Ross. When I went to that pastorate he was not attending church. He and the leading member of the church and official board were not on speaking terms, though his name was on the church book. His business was such that it was natural for me to come in contact with him two or three times a week, and I missed no opportunity to be with him. Not once for three months did I mention the church or his trouble with my prominent official. But at last I knew his vulnerable spots. There were two of them. His mother, who was growing old, grieved because she went to church alone, and that troubled him. His little son was twelve years of age and thought his father the greatest man in the world. Donald did not want his boy to grow up out of the church, as he was living. He had been really converted and remembered it.

I chose Thursday for my visit to Donald, because it was his day of greatest leisure. I went in as usual and waited until he was

alone, when I said frankly, "Donald, I have come to talk religion and church to you. I want you to go with me down to the basement and give me a fair chance to talk it out with you. Come on."

He held back at first as he said, "Now, Dominie, it's been fine to be friends with you, but better let me alone on this subject. You know I can't go back to church with that old hypocrite you have there." But he did come, as I knew he would.

We talked that day, or, rather, he did, for two hours, getting everything off his mind. Beginning with bitterness he passed to the humorous and the pathetic, and at last had no more to say. Then I put my finger on his first soft spot. I said, "Donald, doesn't it make you a little heart-sick to see your old mother going off to church alone every Sunday?"

He started and grew red, and then said rather bitterly, "That's not fair, Dominie. That's hitting below the belt. You know it hurts; but what can I do about it?"

"Why, man, go with her," I replied. Without waiting, I went on: "And, Donald, are you going to let Lawrence, your boy, grow up feeling as you do toward the church and re-

ligion? Do you want him to be the kind of man your attitude will naturally make him?"

His eyes were full of tears as he said, "But what can I do?"

"First, let's pray about it," I replied. "If you will do that, with the will to do whatever is right, you will find the way."

At last he stammered out a prayer, and presently looked up at me with a smile. "It's all right, Dominie," he said. "I'll go the whole route, or die."

A little later he stood up in the church where he and this church member had quarreled, made an apology, asked the man's forgiveness, although he was no more in the wrong than the other, and the two shook hands and forgot their grievances. But that would never have taken place had I not taken plenty of time to study my prospect. In an argument he would have held his own, and mere exhortation would have achieved nothing.

Then there was the case of John Lee, though that is not his real name any more than Donald was the name of the other. He did not attend my church or any church. I met him in a lodge to which both of us belonged, and where we had done some work together. About the

only reason a minister can have for belonging to a lodge is to get acquainted with men whom he may lead to a higher brotherhood, a better fraternity. Well, during a period of about six months, Mr. Lee and I became very well acquainted, and it was impressed upon my conscience that if he was ever to be converted it would have to be through my instrumentality. He went down on my list. Soon I went to see him in his fine office over the leading bank of the city. I brought up the matter of religion at once, only to have it waved aside in a courteous way with the statement that he had settled that matter many years before and did not care to take it up again. My call was short, but as I left I said, "I should like to call again some day, Mr. Lee. You might change your mind in this matter, you know." He told me to come at my pleasure, and I went my way.

Regularly thereafter every other month for three years I called at his office, and each time, if I found him in, I spoke an earnest word for Jesus Christ. If he was not in, I left a brief note, with a similar message about our Lord. At the end of those three years I took up my pen one day to cross off his name from my

little book as hopeless, but changed my mind. I decided to make one more effort, since the following week was the time for my call.

The next Sunday morning I was to preach a sermon on the idea that if one does not strive to live up to his convictions, or attempt to attain to his own moral ideals, he is his own enemy and is blighting his own soul. Just before time to begin the sermon I saw Mr. Lee come into the church. There was no seat for him down stairs, so the ushers conducted him to the balcony, where they found a seat for him near the center of the front section. When the sermon began I promptly forgot his presence, but the Lord helped me to preach with conviction and some power. The closing hymn was "A charge to keep I have, a God to glorify," and before we began to sing, although it was the morning service, I asked for penitents to come forward to the altar. No sooner had we started to sing than Mr. Lee began to make his way out of the pew and down the side stairs before that great audience, to the altar, where he made his confession, was baptized and received into the church. He said: "Brethren, no sermon could have led me to do this. I heard all the

great preachers years ago and they failed to move me. But for three years a man who probably would not care to have me mention his name called regularly at my office to ask me to be a Christian. I could not stand that steady siege. I came to church this morning with no notion of making this confession, but in the hope that it would satisfy my conscience, and I heard that for all these years I have been my own worst enemy in the blighting of my character. Here I stand and, if God will forgive me, I want to be of use to him and to this church."

To multiply cases would be easy, each case representative of a class. But these are sufficient. Let no one say he cannot do such work. Every man can do it, if he has Christ in his life. It will not be easy to *decide* to do it. It will not be easy to begin it. But we are not here simply to do easy things; we are here to do the needed things, and this is one of them. No man's ministry is complete unless it includes this work and the enlistment of others in it also. It requires courage, persistence, tact, zeal, and love for God and souls. Any man who has all these but lacks tact can, if he will, develop that faculty, and so win as a personal worker.

CHAPTER VI

PASTORAL CALLING AND EVANGELISM

A good many years ago, when I was pastor in an Oklahoma town, two families which were social rivals lived almost opposite one another on the same street. One afternoon in my pastoral rounds, I ended my calling for that day in one of these homes, but did not reach the other. The next day for some reason I began work in another part of the community and did not return to that street for several weeks. Within a short time I noticed a coolness on the part of the woman in whose home I had failed to call, and later heard that she was out of humor about something, but being very busy I soon forgot about it. Later on, an official member said to me that Mrs. B. was quite indignant about something I had done, and threatened not to come to church any more. I hastened immediately to her home to find out what was the diffi-

culty. At first she was very reserved and refused to say what was the matter, but finally said, "Why, you were on this street a few weeks ago and called on Mrs. S. and left me out. The neighbors all saw you there and thought you had purposely slighted me, and it was very embarrassing to be cut that way." Unwittingly I had been the means of tilting the social scales in Mrs. S's favor and could not be forgiven until I had restored the balance by calling on Mrs. B.

Having straightened that out, I went my way in some disgust, but feeling at least that I had saved the day, only to be told soon afterward that Mrs. S. was indignant about something. As soon as I could I hurried to her house, and she informed me that I had recently called on Mrs. B., and the neighbors were all wondering if I had cut her off my calling list, since I had not called on her at the same time. In order to keep the peace in that community, I dared not call on one of those families without calling also on the other the same day. I was being used as a sort of social lever. I did not succeed in becoming particularly popular with either family, nor were my calls especially desired. I was

obliged to treat both families exactly alike to avoid trouble.

This is an extreme case, but I wonder if every pastor has not heard complaints about his neglect of this or that family because he had called less frequently there than somewhere else. In every case such complaints grow out of the idea that the minister's calls are purely social, and if that view were current, such complaints would have some justification.

If a pastor's chief desire is to be a "good mixer," and to have his people so regard him, his calling is apt to be a purely social affair. I do not regard such an epithet as complimentary unless I am able, through social contacts, to turn my work as a pastor to better account. A good mixer may be a good pastor, but he will have continually to fight the temptation to let his visits dwindle into the shallowest social intercourse.

Why should a minister call from house to house? Surely not merely to keep his people from thinking he neglects them! He scarcely need occupy many hours each week in such negative work. Does not the value of pastoral calling inhere in the pastoral relationship? Is

any call worthy the name of pastoral which does not aim to do for some one something which it is a pastor's duty to do? Then a pastoral call may be defined in terms of what it is a pastor's duty to do for his people. If it is his duty to be a social light among them, to pass around his calls as if they were social favors; or if his chief mission is to gratify his people and keep them good-natured, regardless of how they are living, the pastor's calls will tend to be light and frivolous. But if it is a pastor's duty to help his people to be good, to have faith in God and to know God, to love the church and to be faithful in its service, to comfort such as mourn and to strengthen the weak, then a pastoral call must always keep such ends in view, and in some way seek to accomplish them.

There is no virtue in perfunctory pastoral calls, made simply for the sake of the report at Quarterly Conference. Such calls are a burden to the pastor and of no value to the church. They burden the pastor because his aim is unworthy and it seems to be useless work. Is there no remedy for this evil? Must ministers go on thus wasting their time? If pastoral calling is made what it should be, is

linked up with evangelism, organized, planned, it can be made a joy to the pastor and a blessing to the church.

A pastor in a new field should begin his calling at once. Not later than the second Sunday in his new pulpit he should announce that he will begin his pastoral visitation the following day on some particular street, and that during the week he will call on other streets which he then should name; or, if it is a country place, he will designate the roads he will follow. He will assume that the visiting list prepared for him by his predecessor is correct, and will follow it in his first round. If the retiring pastor did his duty, he left a visiting list which gives the name and address of each family, with the names and ages and birthdays of the children, and indicating who are members of the church. Usually this information is not furnished, but at least street addresses may be assumed to be correct. The new pastor should provide himself with a loose-leaf notebook, and before starting out each day should write the name of each family he is to visit that afternoon at the top of a page, allowing an entire page for each family record. He will have one fixed purpose in this first

round, and he will stick to that purpose as tenaciously as an insurance agent sticks to his. He will get acquainted with his people, and do it in the most direct way possible.

At about two o'clock he will stop at the first address on the first street on his list. Possibly the lady of the house was not at church either the previous Sunday or the week before, and will not know him. He will forestall her turning him away by quickly making himself known, and will soon be admitted by an embarrassed woman trying to make excuses for not having been at church for two Sundays. He will set her at ease very quickly. and at once proceed to business. Taking out his loose-leaf book, he will tell the lady his sole purpose in this round is to find out all he can about his people. He will know nothing about this family, and will ask questions to help in getting acquainted. Probably his first questions, pencil in hand, will be what her husband's initials are, what his business is, and what is his business address. Next he will ask for the names and ages of the children, including their birthdays. Then he will inquire who in the family are members of the church. Of course he could get that informa-

tion from the church record, but it will do the family much more good and be fully as well for him to get it directly from the father or mother. If the lady replies that she is the only church member in the family, and if she has children above nine or ten years of age, it gives the pastor opportunity to offer to try to help her win her family for Christ and the church. This puts her on record as desiring and willing to work to that end. When he is leaving, which will be immediately on completing his record, the new pastor will say, especially if he is afflicted as I am—"Now, Mrs. Jones, the next time I see you I will know I have met you and that I ought to know you, but I will probably not know your name. Won't you help me a very great deal by saying as soon as we meet, 'I am Mrs. Jones'? That will greatly help me. Thank you. Good afternoon."

"What," says some pastor, "not offer prayer?" Well, that depends. If Mrs. Jones invites it, or acts as if she would appreciate it, or you feel in your heart you ought to do it, then have prayer. Otherwise, wait until Mrs. Jones knows you well enough to want you to pray for her, before volunteering to

do so. The longer I stay in a pastorate, the more places I pray in my calling, but in my first round I pray mostly as I go to and from the homes. To offer prayer in a home may not do as much good as to pray on the walk in front of it before you go in. I do not know that offering a prayer aloud in a home will help it any more than a prayer offered silently out on the walk. Of course, if what is desired is to have Mrs. Jones hear your prayer, why, by all means pray; only remember that Jesus said that they who pray for that reason "have their reward," which intimates that they need expect no more. The chief object of this first visit is to get acquainted.

If the new pastor sticks to his object, he will get over the ground quite rapidly, but will be so busy that he will do little else in addition to his sermon preparation. But when he has been in every home in his parish, he will take his loose-leaf notebook and will take plenty of time thoroughly to digest all the information he has gathered. He should then make a list of all the brothers-in-law and another of all the sisters-in-law to the church; another for all the children of Christian parents, arranging them by ages as well as by streets,

and he should make a list of such families as are of Christian faith, but are not in any way attached to the church. When that is done, he will know his field. He will have added to his street list several families whom he has discovered by inquiring in each home whether there are other families near whom he should visit, and these he will properly look after.

By this time he knows his members, his constituency, his field for work, and his prospects of success. I always feel a distinct elation after this first round, if I find a good many brothers-in-law to the church, or a good many children of Christian homes not in the membership of the church. Here is my field for cultivation, and I welcome it.

When this is done, and not until then, let the pastor call in half a dozen men whom he knows to be interested and who are acquainted with the people of the community, and with them go over his constituency list and get what help he can in estimating his material, and determining his immediate program of pastoral visitation. At this meeting or a similar one, the plans suggested in the chapter on "An Evangelistic Program" should be discussed. Just now we are concerned only in

the pastor's attempts to make plans for his parish calls. After such an evening, studying family after family, individual after individual, the pastor will know much better where to begin his efforts to win men to Christian discipleship.

Let us assume that this pastor is a member of a Spring Conference. By the time his first round of calling is completed, summer is at hand, and by September the pastor's constituency list is perfected. As complete a study as possible of his material has been made, and plans determined upon for his second round. The other features of his church program will harmonize with these plans and all will be made to focus upon some definite thing which he wishes to accomplish early in the season. For example, since the chief work of a church is evangelism, the subject which we are considering, we will assume that he wishes to make that the supreme object of his effort in the early fall and winter. He will focus his sermon-building, his calling and his prayer meetings upon that objective, and will urge the Sunday school teaching force and church in general to join him in that endeavor. The chief weakness of pastoral effort is, in

many cases, lack of unity. One thing is sought through sermons, another thing through the prayer meeting, another in the Sunday school, and still another through pastoral visitation, so that there is no decisive and unified campaign for any definite victory. And for its own stimulus and spiritual tonic a church needs an occasional victory. How can it be won without a definite effort being made to attain a definite end? Let the pastor plan his work with this fact in mind and he will see larger accomplishment.

Again, from the pulpit or through the church calendar on the previous Sunday, the pastor will name the streets on which he will call during the week, and then will hold to his schedule. This time he is out to win people to Christ and the church, or at least to make a beginning in that direction. He began his last round, let us suppose, in the Jones family, where there are four children, all above ten years of age, and where Mrs. Jones is the only member of the church. By reference to the Sunday school records, he has found that the two elder Jones children do not regularly attend Sunday school; and from the ushers that Mr. Jones does not attend either church

or Sunday school; and that Mrs. Jones is herself very irregular in church attendance and never attends prayer meeting.

He is now beginning his second round at the same home, has planned his campaign and has a definite object to attain on this second visit. Evidently, unless there are circumstances not revealed on the surface, either Mr. Jones has the stronger influence over the family and is actively opposed to the church, or else Mrs. Jones is not very active in her own Christian life. Something must be done. The pastor will not hesitate to attempt to do his duty. What is needed is not so much for the minister to pray in such a home as to get some one already in the home to praying.

After kindly greetings, the pastor begins by saying that he wants to be a real help to Mrs. Jones in bringing her family into the church, and that he has been wondering what would be the best way to go about it. He tells her he has found that the elder children seem to be dropping out of Sunday school, while they seldom, if ever, attend church service or Epworth League. The reason for that must be found and removed, he assures her, before

they can be led to faith. He reminds her that the other children are regularly at Sunday school.

At this point he gives Mrs. Jones opportunity to make whatever explanation or excuse she cares to offer. Then, without the least indication of impertinence, the fact that Mrs. Jones herself does not attend prayer meeting, is irregular at church, and that Mr. Jones is never present may be brought out, with the suggestion from the pastor that perhaps she would be there if she could, and that he is wondering if there is anything he can do to attract Mr. Jones to the church. He will seek to make Mrs. Jones feel that the salvation of her family depends largely upon her own efforts and example, but that he is eager to help. He offers to see Mr. Jones and the girls personally, or to call at the home some evening when all will be there. He will, of course, pray for them, but he points out that his efforts will fail unless they are reenforced by a sincere desire and effort on her part. He urges that her own more regular attendance at church and at least occasional attendance at prayer meeting, with such help as she can give in interesting the rest of the family, is

very necessary for any sort of success. Thus, two things will be accomplished: the good woman will be made to feel her own responsibility, and that in living up to it she is to have real help.

At another home, where every one eligible to church membership is a member, and where there is some ability and disposition for service, the pastor may express gratification at their regularity at the church services, his appreciation of their willingness to work, and then give to them one or two names of people on his list of most hopeful prospective members with the request that they try to win them to Christ. When he is leaving he may remark: "You may see me pass your house quite frequently when I shall not stop. My work and time must be given to people who need me most. You know Christ said, 'They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick,' and so I shall often pass you by. I hope you will take it as a compliment that I do so." By following this method in such homes, a pastor will have an increasing number of families who take pride in being able to do without pastoral visitation except when something special is wanted of him.

Even then, a letter will often take the place of a call.

Each day, before starting out, a pastor should study the list of families where he is to call that day and plan his visit to each of them. He will know the needs of these homes and what opportunities they offer for ministry, and will have a distinct object in each visit. In one there is no church paper, in another no one attends prayer meeting, in another there is some one who ought to teach a Sunday school class, in another the children are losing their interest in Sunday school, and in another he proposes to leave the name of a prospective church member who shall be their special charge and ward. Each day, on returning from his work, all the information gathered will be carefully recorded. Children not in Sunday school and new comers will be immediately reported to the proper teacher, or membership secretary, and new families will be reported to the visitation committee. The aim of this visitation will be, in general, evangelism—winning people for Christ and the church—but a variety of methods will be used, the proper method being suited to each family. Such work is a fascinating and ex-

hilarating exercise, and will lead to sure victory.

In later visitations the pastor will maintain the evangelistic aim, but he may give special attention to some definite need or phase of church work in each home. For example, his first visit is to get acquainted, to gather information; his second is to begin work for accessions and to assign work to others; his third will continue this, but may lay emphasis on good literature in the home; the fourth may have particularly to do with Sunday school, or prayer meeting, or the evening service; another visit may aim to develop sociability, to see that socially isolated families and individuals are brought to the attention of those who will help to get them into church fellowship. In one church I made an entire round of visitation, mentioning in each home half a dozen excellent families who had fallen into the habit of never going to church, and whom I wished very much to bring back. I just mentioned them and suggested in a few places ways in which they could help. By the end of the visitation four of the families were back in the church, and all of them but one were active within a short time.

Just here let me say a word or two of the way in which a live pastor may relate his pastoral visitation to his evening service. What is the chief purpose of his pastoral calling? To win converts? Then to urge those whom he seeks to win to attend the evening service will help, providing the evening service is made distinctly evangelistic. Without being too personal in his preaching, one may nevertheless be able to answer every question raised by those visited during the week. I recall one period of nearly three months of my ministry when at every evening service there were confessions at the altar of the church, and in every instance those who came were the fruitage of my efforts during the preceding week. Visitation and Sunday evening sermon work well together. I cannot urge this method too strongly.

A good many years ago a young college student pastor was appointed to a small country village charge in the West, where he found that his constituency were entirely wealthy or retired farmers. His college work was heavy and kept him away from home so much of the time, the college being in another town, that he was unable to do more during nine

months of the year than look after the sick and aged and to prepare his sermons. The remaining three months were the busiest of the year for his parishioners, and yet during those months he must do a year's pastoral visiting. He decided that, since he was reared in the country and knew how to farm, his best way was to call with a hoe, a plow or a pitch fork. It was what in the corn belt is called a backward season, and many farmers were behind with their work. He consulted two leading laymen, retired farmers, who lived in the village, and secured their help. These two agreed to find out each Sunday who in the congregation was most in need of help, and to report to the pastor at the close of the service.

When the pastor that morning greeted the farmer most in need of help, he would say: "Have an extra hoe ready about seven in the morning. I'm coming out to hoe for you. I hope your chickens are fat, too, Mrs. Belmot, for hoeing always makes me hungry." Soon another would pass out and he would say: "Have an extra pitchfork ready in the hay field Wednesday morning, Brother Wyant. I'll be out by seven o'clock to help you for a couple of days with your haying. Mrs.

Wyant, you have no idea how fond I am of hot apple pie." Everyone would be a bit envious of the two families singled out in this way for momentary attention, but glad for them, and they said to themselves, "He's a real man."

They soon found their pastor was as good a farmer as he was a preacher; that he needed no sympathy when he worked; and that if several men were on the job a zest and swing, a jollity and good will were added to the work when he arrived which made everyone accomplish more than on other days. Some one would take him back to the village in the evening, where, after the deep sleep of physical weariness, he would awake with a vigor and relish for work equal to any farmer. He worked at least four days of each week. By August, when threshing began, he had done at least one day's work on every farm in his parish.

The day threshing began, he was early at the threshing place and ready for work. Every farmer in that vicinity knew that he liked a joke as well as any of them, and they began jokingly to boast that they would put the preacher on the strawstack and "snow him under" before noon. No one really expected

him to go on the strawstack, the hardest place around the thresher. But it happened that in his home community he had been the champion strawstack builder, and he accepted the assignment with a jolly laugh, and would not give it up when others suggested an easier place for him. It was his first experience with a blow stacker, and for a time he was at a loss to know how to shape his work, but he soon found a way. What a day of toil and sweat and leg-weariness it was! But not for the farm would he have shown the white feather or called for help. When night came the job was done, and the entire community gathered about the strawstack, as the tired and begrimed preacher slid to the ground, and gave him a hearty cheer. Four days a week for three weeks he spent on the strawstack, until he grew to be as expert at managing the blow stacker as he had been in managing the carrier stacker.

Then, one Thursday noon, the wealthiest man in the community, who was neither church member nor church attendant, came to him and said, "Dominie, they go to my place to-night. I want you to build my stack to-morrow."

Now the pastor had uniformly refused to work on Friday, reserving that and the following day for sermon preparation and for pastoral work in the village, so he replied: "But I don't work on Friday and Saturday. I've got to try to keep some of these wicked neighbors of yours from going to the bad, you know."

The men standing around began to laugh, but the farmer grinned as he said, "Come on now, Dominie. I've got to have as good a stack as any Methodist, and if I'm to get it, you must build it for me. Come on. I'll give you four dollars to build my stack to-morrow. Let the sermon go for once."

It had been the pastor's plan if anyone offered to pay him for a day or two of work, to say: "No. My time belongs to the church. You can put what my work is worth into the benevolent collection." He replied, therefore, to the farmer's proposal: "Sorry, but money doesn't count in this case. I must get those sermons."

After increasing his offer to six dollars and being refused, the farmer, feeling that he must win out, and taking a good deal of pleasure in the contest with the preacher in the presence

of his neighbors, exclaimed: "Now I'm going to see if you are as good a sport as you are stack builder. I don't know a thing about your preaching, for I don't go to church, but you are going to build that stack if you have any sporting blood in you. I'll let you set your own price. Build that stack and I'll pay the penalty whatever it is. My neighbors will tell you I live up to my word, even if I don't go to church. Now then, how about it?"

The preacher saw his opening and took it. "I'll go you on that, sir. You may put whatever you think my work is worth in the collection at the church when the benevolences are taken about a month from now, and, in addition, you and your family all be at church at half-past ten next Sunday morning. You want me to come to see you; you come to see me."

For a moment there was silence, and then the farmers began to laugh, and even to shout their glee, for their neighbor was well known for his witticisms at the expense of church-going people. He was game, however, and in a moment turned to the crowd and said with mock anger, "Shut up, you unmannerly Rubes. Don't you know how to behave when my preacher comes to see me? I'll be at church

next Sunday to see how many of you fellows stick to your preacher as well as I do to mine."

His was the largest stack-building job in the community. Work began at sunrise the next morning, and ended barely before dark, but the great semicircular stack was finished, and when the preacher slid to the ground his legs would hardly hold him and his feet were so sore he could scarcely walk. He was tired to the point of exhaustion—too tired to eat the supper prepared for the workmen at nine o'clock that evening.

The farmer was as good as his word and the next Sunday morning he and his family were at church. To-day they are not only members but pillars in that church, and six farmers' families, besides many others, joined the church in the early fall because while building strawstacks, haystacks, or plowing corn, the pastor had not lost sight of the main purpose of a pastoral visit. He had visited in over-alls and brogans, with a pitchfork or hoe, but he had won people for God and the church. Not the form but the object sought, and the fidelity and skill with which that object is attained, make a call worthy the name "pastoral visit."

CHAPTER VII

AN EVANGELISTIC PROGRAM

Pastors, laymen, district superintendents, and bishops have been heard recently to complain of "handed-down" programs. It is even threatened in some quarters that there will be rebellion if there are more of them. There have been programs, it is true, of every sort "handed down" and from every quarter. Some of them overlap, indicating that our leaders have not always planned in unison. It is not possible successfully to put on two programs at the same time, each of them requiring two services a week and using all of a pastor's available time.

But have distressed and hurried pastors stopped to think that probably, if not surely, this "programming" from above is due to failure on the part of pastor and people to have any definite program of their own? I have been a pastor for twenty-six years, have never occupied any other position, and I speak from experience and observation when I say that

nothing in these twenty-six years past has so stimulated the church, so stirred pastors and official boards to the adoption of definite programs for their local churches, as have these "handed-down" programs so much complained of. Let us complain at them less and learn from them more, and follow with open-mindedness the way they lead.

In giving these lectures in more than a dozen institutes to nearly fifteen hundred pastors, I have uniformly asked this question: "Who of you has a Committee on Evangelism? Raise your hands." Not more than ten per cent have responded in the affirmative. The next question has always been, "Who of you has a Finance Committee? Show your hands," and not less than ninety per cent have raised their hands. This can mean only one thing: the church, as a working force, has some kind of financial program, but no evangelistic program. The pastor may have a plan of his own and may be trying to work it out; but the church has none and therefore is not working at evangelism in any definite way. The term "program" may be overworked, but the idea back of the term is scarcely being realized in the field of evangelism. Does that

appear to be a rash statement? Let us see if it is true.

A program must have in it two elements without which there can be no program worthy the name. First, there must be a definite objective, a desired end, clearly stated and earnestly sought; and, second, there must be an equally definite plan by which it is proposed to attain that objective. The war has made us see these two elements of a program very clearly. In that great crisis the objective was to conquer the Central Powers, to win the war. But to achieve that end, lesser objectives were sought: so many kilometers advance each day, each hour, in a given drive, until some larger objective was finally attained. St. Mihiel, the Argonne, Chateau Thierry—these were set as objectives to be attained by first attaining lesser objectives; but there was never an advance without a definite objective clearly fixed and aimed at. The soldier might sing, "Where do we go from here?" but at least his superiors knew where they were headed. There was also an equally decisive plan for attaining each lesser objective, and all these plans together formed the great strategy for achieving the final goal.

Our supreme evangelistic objective is set by the command of our Lord, "Go ye . . . and disciple all nations." That has not been accomplished by nineteen hundred years of effort. It remains our ultimate objective yet to be attained. But what have been and what are the objectives of the church for this year, or this quadrennium, or this decade? What has been and what is the definite objective of any given church for this same period? The Centenary has set Methodism an objective for this year—a very definite objective. There are not lacking objectors to this definiteness who even condemn it. Let us have programs, these critics seem to say, but let us avoid figures and statistics. But there can be no program without a goal. Nor are vague objectives, such as "A Revived Church," "A Working Church," or the slogan, "The whole world for Christ," sufficient. For my part I glory in the challenge of the leadership of the church which has at last set us an objective, and is commanding "Forward, march!" for we know whither we are marching.

The slogan, "A Million for Christ," is no more than a general objective for a local church. One pastor, one church organization,

cannot win a million in a year. Even though to this challenge my church and I respond, "We are with you; we will do our best," no definite goal for our attainment has been set. How much is our "best"? Until we settle that, our objective is too general for definite endeavor. Who knows what is the best a local church can do, until it is set at some specific task? Indefiniteness is the weakness—I had almost said the sin—of the church. For myself and for my church a definite goal must be set before we can outline any real program. A twenty-five per cent increase in membership may not be the proper objective for many churches. The constituency of some is too small, and of others is too large, for that ratio. Ten per cent may be enough for the former, while the latter, where a large constituency awaits cultivation, should make fifty per cent increase.

In the church of which I am now pastor, during 1912 a gain of a little less than seven per cent was made; in each of the three years, 1913 to 1915, one per cent was lost; while in 1916 neither gain nor loss was recorded. In the Conference year 1917–18 a gain of nearly twenty per cent was made, and in the follow-

ing Conference year again about one per cent was lost. Finally in 1919–20, there was a gain of more than twenty-five per cent. Thus, in a period of eight years, almost exactly a fifty per cent gain has been recorded, of which one half was made in the past Conference year. For the eight years the average gain has been six and a half per cent. Almost exactly one half that gain has been by letter and the other half, or three and a quarter per cent, has been from probation. This is about in keeping with the general advance of the Methodist denomination for this period, and therefore, so far as securing conversions goes, this is about an average church. It ought to be stated, also, that seventy-five per cent of the accessions for the past Conference year have been by way of probation; or nearly twenty per cent in net gain for the year through conversion. This gives evidence of a healthy condition.

After a careful study of Quarterly Conference, official board and membership records, and diligent inquiry among various members of the church, no trace of any sort of a definite evangelistic program has been found until the year 1917. On the records of the

official board for the early fall of that year appears a resolution to the effect that "it shall be the objective of the church for this year, ending at the next session of Conference, April, 1918, to gain a ten per cent increase in the membership of the church." Until that year it had been the policy of the church to receive into fellowship those who presented letters of transfer, and any others who might offer themselves for membership, and to bring in the children of the Sunday school through a probationers' class. But no definite objective had been set, and no definite method of evangelistic endeavor had been adopted.

The contrast between these methods is apparent when it is stated that from 1912 until 1917 a total gain of only about four and one half per cent was made, while in 1918, the first year with a program, there was an increase of about twenty per cent. In the Conference year 1918–19 again no evangelistic program was adopted, the church devoting all its attention and energy to war work and the Centenary, and a loss of one per cent in membership was sustained. In 1919–20 once more an evangelistic program, aiming by definite methods to effect a twenty-five per cent increase

in membership, was adopted, and more than that percentage was actually gained early in April before Conference.

It is more than an accident that advance in membership by conversion should be uniformly made when there was a definite program, and that a static condition should prevail when no such program was being followed. Unhesitatingly I urge every pastor and official board to set up a definite objective at which they shall aim. Having done that, they are ready to begin working out plans for success. When an objective has thus been determined upon and definite plans have been made for attaining it, then, and not till then, may a church be said to have a program.

Many expedients and activities of the church have been utterly futile because they aimed at nothing. These activities resulted in no definite product. Activity, to be moral, must have motive, and motive grows out of aims and objective. Activity for its own sake is without moral quality. As I have already remarked, a machinist might gather wheels, belts, journals, cogs, and gear them to power, and exclaim as his mountain of machinery

began to move, "See what I have built. It works! It works!" and at once begin to proclaim his achievement. But careful investigation must show something produced or some service rendered to justify pride in one's invention. If there is no product, the machine is a failure, no matter how well it works. Church machinery must be constructed, not with a view to activity, motion, but to product. A church and its pastor engaged in endless activities do not prove necessarily the existence of a program. It takes the product to prove that, and the product must be of the kind planned for and expected; in other words, those who make church plans should aim at definite result, and with at least some success should achieve it. Tested by this twofold standard, not a few church plans must be discarded.

In determining an evangelistic program for a local church, then, first fix upon a definite objective. It ought to be a sufficiently large objective not only to challenge, but even to startle, the attention of the church. I have previously remarked that every church needs an occasional victory for the sake of its own spiritual health. But a victory accidentally

won, or won unexpectedly, only awakens curiosity, while a cause championed and attained after persistent endeavor constitutes a real victory. Make the evangelistic aim large and keep it before the people. No matter if a few timid souls say it can never be attained. Such forebodings but challenge the faith of the courageous. Get the church to adopt as its own the end sought. Get it down on the official board records, as well as the records of the Sunday school, the Men's Club and the Missionary Society, that these organizations and, indeed, the church as a whole have started somewhere, a very definite somewhere.

Before the objective is definitely fixed, a wise pastor will have specific plans worked out for attaining it. His plan will be developed in considerable detail, leaving room, however, for initiative on the part of his helpers. Immediately after the aim is fixed he will come forward with his plans and have them adopted, if possible as a matter of record. He will then have divided the responsibility for his completed program between himself and his people, and he can begin to urge the command, "Forward, march!" and his people will know where and how they are to march.

Now for the plan of campaign. A revival? Yes, to be sure, but by what method? I do not believe I can better discuss this part of my subject than to tell you the method of my own church and how it is worked.

Early in September the official board adopted as its aim a twenty-five per cent increase in membership to be attained by Easter Sunday. At the same meeting a committee of three on evangelistic program was appointed with the pastor as chairman. The pastor had his own plans already laid; but he felt that the church should develop its own program. A little later the Quarterly Conference met and confirmed the objective and program which had been adopted by the official board.

Before calling the Committee on Program together, the pastor divided the church constituency into fifteen Units, containing from eight to ten families each and made up about equally of members and non-members of the church. He then selected fifteen of his best and busiest laymen as leaders of these Units.

When this was done the Committee on Evangelism was called together and the possibilities of the Unit System as an evangelistic agency were strongly presented. The slogan "Fifteen

revivals in this church" was suggested, and that fifteen men could be found to lead them was confidently asserted. It was urged that although the constituency of the church was small, it was large enough, if systematically and enthusiastically worked, to produce more than the twenty-five per cent increase sought. It was also pointed out that very soon the regular midweek prayer meeting could be turned over, at least once in two weeks, to Unit Leaders for reports, discussion of plans, appeals for help or celebrations of victory, and that the entire scheme could be related to the Sunday evening service when every leader might encourage his Unit to bring in their sheaves.

The only objection raised, as the discussion proceeded, was that considerable time would be required to arrange the Units, select leaders and secure their consent to serve. The pastor then produced his loose-leaf notebook in which these lists had been laboriously worked out. An hour was spent in going over the Units, perfecting them, rearranging them and finally adopting the plan as a working organization. Then the list of Unit Leaders was presented and after some changes had been made it was voted to recommend the entire plan to the

official board, where it was finally unanimously adopted.

Before the plan was presented to the official board, however, the pastor called the proposed leaders to his home for an evening's conference. Thirteen of the fifteen were present, and not a man refused to take his assignment. For two hours the pastor conferred with these leaders, answering questions, allaying fears, and suggesting expedients. After prayer, a few words on the general plan, and the acceptance of his assignment by each leader, the pastor said: "Now, brothers, while you go over your lists and talk them over among yourselves, I want to take up Unit No. 1 with Brother Jones, its leader, and make sure we understand each other. Then, Brother Walker, we will take up your list, and so on around."

Then Mr. Jones and the pastor together went over Unit No. 1. It contained nine families of forty-two persons, twenty church members and twenty-two non-members. Two entire families on his list were not members of the church and very little interested in it, while at least two other families in which some individuals were church members were only lukewarm in their interest. After noting

these facts the pastor said: "Now, I suggest that, first, you get the members of the church in your Unit together at your home next Monday evening, and I will come and meet with you. We will then see what can be done and work out a plan to get at those who are not members of the church."

"But, Pastor," exclaimed Mr. Jones, in some consternation, "I don't know how to do this. You know I'm not as pious myself as I ought to be. How am I going to get this done? Why, I'm scared already."

"That's good. I'm glad you are. It will do you good. But you just get those folks out at that meeting, and in the meantime go over your list carefully and pick out your surest prospects, and we will see what we can do at the meeting. Really your biggest task just now is to get the church members of your Unit out Monday night."

By ten o'clock each leader had been dealt with in about the same fashion, a date fixed for a meeting with each Unit which the pastor could attend, and the leaders urged to get the church members out to the meeting and to have selected the likeliest prospects. In dealing with each leader it was pointed out that

he and his group ought to win a definite number, which was named, by Easter Day. Care was taken to suggest such goals for each Unit that the entire number would be just a few more than the total necessary to reach the church objective.

A thoughtful reader will see that this plan involved a clearly defined program for each Unit. On the evening set for the first Unit meeting the pastor found about half the church membership of the Unit present. At first he was disappointed, but then considered that if half of the church membership was regularly present at the Sunday evening service, it would be doing very well indeed; also that Monday evening was a difficult night to get people out.

After a song was sung, Mr. Jones stated the object of the meeting and read the list of the Unit membership, indicating the names of their prospects for conversion and church membership. He was himself very much enthused and eagerly appealed to the persons present to be ready for the campaign just beginning. He spoke briefly about the victory sure to come if they would simply do their part in the work assigned them. Then the pastor added a few

words of encouragement and urged them to do the work of their Unit in their own way.

In about three weeks a similar meeting was held with each Unit. One or two of them came very near being failures, while others were much better than the first one. Every Unit had decided upon a definite aim and a method for attaining it, and had gone to work. It had not been an easy period for the pastor. There had been a few objectors, a few pessimists, a few failures; but altogether he was gratified and greatly encouraged.

The immediate results of this campaign did not fully meet the expectations of the pastor or his committee. They had hoped for an immediate increase in attendance at prayer meeting and Sunday evening service, and later for accessions into the church. The multiplication of cottage prayer meetings, however, tended for a few weeks to prevent any large increase at the regular midweek service.

The first noticeable effect of the campaign was a frequent telephone request from a leader, or one of his helpers, for the pastor to call at a certain place where someone was anxious to see him. Soon these special calls consumed practically all of his time, and very

fruitful calls they were. One evening soon after the campaign opened, the pastor remarked to his wife, "I never knew people to be so ready to accept Christ, so eager to receive help and so easily led to open confession."

At a church social gathering at about this time the pastor met two couples, men and their wives who were strangers but who had heard the general invitation at the Sunday evening service. Within five minutes after meeting the first couple he found that neither the husband or wife had ever belonged to any church; that they had three small children, and that they had recently come to the community. Immediately they were given a cordial invitation to accept Christ and come into church fellowship. The man looked at his wife, hesitated a moment and then said: "We had been talking about it, and we knew we ought to do it. Why, yes, we will come next Sunday evening and begin right." True to their word, they came and at the close of the sermon knelt at the altar and gave themselves to Christ and were received into the church. During that same evening, the pastor also met the second couple, and two weeks later they came in precisely the same way, and

since then their eldest son has also joined on probation. Beginning with the first Sunday in November, soon after the campaign was launched, until Easter Sunday, there were conversions every Sunday evening. Some of those who were won had not been seen by Unit Leaders or their helpers, and a few the pastor had never heard of until they presented themselves in response to the general invitation at the close of the sermon. The spirit of revival simply was in the air, was contagious, and it seemed to become easy for men and women to decide for Christ.

When the campaign for fifteen revivals began, there were not twenty young people, twelve or more years of age, in the church homes of the community who had not already given their hearts to Christ. The work of the Sunday school had been well done right along. To gain the desired twenty-five per cent increase in membership, not more than twenty-five could be expected for a probationers' class from that source. In view of this fact, it will not be taken as an objection on my part to the conversion of children when I say that ninety per cent of those who were won in the evening services were mature young people, or

adults, a good many of them being fathers and mothers.

The campaign is now ended and its results known. A gross increase of thirty-one per cent, seventy per cent of whom came by conversion, was received into church fellowship. The net increase was greater than had been set as a goal. More individual workers had a part in the victory than could have possibly helped in an old-time series of special meetings, and the Unit Leaders were especially helped and encouraged by their successes. Palm Sunday the last probationers' class, numbering forty-two, besides a few who came by letter, stood at the altar and were received into full membership—the largest class ever taken in at one service in this church. During Holy Week services were conducted each evening, not so much to secure conversions as to give the Unit Leaders and their coworkers opportunity for rejoicing over victories won. No great crowds attended these meetings, but they were deeply spiritual and a power for good, and led up to a victorious service on Easter morning, when the largest Sunday morning audience seen in this church in twenty-five years was present.

Do not these results justify the insistence that a program with definite objectives, definitely sought for, brings results? The aim of this chapter is not to urge the particular method employed or goal established in this instance as an objective to be adopted by every pastor or church. There are other methods, and other objectives may be advisable. But let no pastor or church fail to have some definite objective, and an equally definite plan for its attainment, for every department of church work.

An evangelistic program? By all means! Objective? A twenty-five per cent increase in membership. Method? The Unit System adjusted to evangelistic purpose and aiming at as many revivals in the church as there are Units, all welded into one great revival for the entire church. Result? Objective attained; everybody active and happy; the church doing its normal work in a normal way.

CHAPTER VIII

CHILD EVANGELISM

Every child born into this world has an earthly father and mother and a heavenly Father. It is no more surely related to its earthly father and mother than it is related to its heavenly Father. It derives physical life from its physical parents and spiritual life from its heavenly Parent, and is as surely alive spiritually as it is physically. Every babe is a child of God. The church is God's agent or representative to care for his children and keep them in health, to bring them to maturity, and guard them through life in the knowledge and honor of their Father. It is entirely correct to say that children need no conversion, that they are born with "eternal life." It is, however, very unsafe and unwise to make such an assertion without further explanation.

I shall not now attempt to deal with matters of theology or philosophy, but shall confine myself entirely to practical suggestions con-

cerning child evangelism. That the child needs to be evangelized when it has been born God's child, needs some explanation. I offer no apology for citing my own experience of conversion as affording fairly clear reasons for the apparent dilemma. I come of good old-time Presbyterian stock, which taught in my mother's day that children are born in sin, in an unredeemed state, but that if they die in infancy, they are saved by a special dispensation of Providence. While this is a vast improvement upon the doctrine that even some children are elected to eternal death, and that there are "infants in hell not a span long," as I once heard a Calvinist say, it is a long way from the teaching of Christ that "of such is the kingdom of heaven." According to the faith of my mother's day, unredeemed childhood, as soon as it is able to understand, had to be brought to saving faith through the gospel, and devoted motherhood did not fail to accept and undertake this task. I do not recall when I learned to pray, nor when I first learned of Christ. I seem always to have known the story, and I was early taught its meaning.

We lived in those days in a log cabin near

Montague, Texas. It was 1876, and I was but five years of age. Each afternoon mother allowed me to have a piece of bread, and if I asked for it, I might have molasses on it. Often I would forget to ask for the molasses and later would notice the oversight and remedy it in my own way. In the cellar under the kitchen, reached by an outside door, was a barrel of sorghum molasses, our year's supply. A metal faucet permitted easy drawing, and when I wanted to sweeten my bread I formed the habit of going to the barrel and drawing it for myself. One day mother discovered my habit and told me I must not do that any more. She explained that if I wanted molasses I should ask for it, for fear that otherwise I might some day leave the faucet open and spill it on the floor. I understood perfectly and had no other thought than to obey.

After some days I forgot again to ask for molasses until I was playing in the yard, when with a guilty feeling I stole into the cellar and drew it. Sure enough, in my guilty nervous haste I let the faucet slip too widely open and spilled about half a pint on the floor. It was a dirt floor, and I tried to conceal the evidence of my disobedience with dirt. Think-

ing I had accomplished my purpose, I went on about my play. Later in the afternoon mother discovered what I had done, and called me in. She sat sewing or knitting, and had a small box near her feet, and she told me to come and sit there, for she wanted to tell me a story. How I loved mother's stories! particularly those out of the Bible! At first I did not think of the molasses at all. That had gone entirely out of my mind. She began by telling me what sin is, what it does, what God thinks of it, how it ruins us and prevents us from being his children any more. She told it so vividly that I began to realize that sin is the very worst thing in the world. Then I thought of the molasses. There seemed to be a river of it and every one, but particularly God, could see it. Mother talked about heaven and the "bad place," and how awful it is to sin and make God sorry, and to be outside God's family.

I do not know how she managed to do it, holding the theology of that day, but I know the thing which most deeply concerned me then was that I had been God's little boy until I drew that molasses, and that then I was not his little boy any more. I do not recall think-

ing about the devil, or hell, or of being lost. I simply wanted to be God's little boy. I can imagine from the way I felt how I looked. Despair was in my heart, utter black despair. I asked mother, and I remember how my voice startled me, "W-w-will just one sin make me be God's little boy no more, mother—just one sin?" Her voice was very quiet and sad as she replied, "Yes, just one sin will do it."

I think, wise woman that she was, that she saw my despair, and she immediately began telling me about Jesus, of his love for us, and how his death washes our sins away, and makes us God's children again when we have sinned but are truly sorry and promise never to sin any more. She made a beautiful story of it, and her voice was to me like music the angels must make before God's throne. At first I could hardly listen for despair. Then I began to see hope, and I got up from the box and came and stood right before her, and when she finally ended with a smile and looked into my eyes, I was crying and smiling at the same time. She asked, "Was that a good story, son?" and I replied,

"The best you ever told."

"Well, you may run along and play again

now," she said, and I went out into the yard. She had not mentioned the molasses, but from that day until this I have not poured molasses or syrup without recalling that day and my conversion. I did not know it was conversion then, nor did my mother know it. She was simply trying to make her boy understand the danger of sin. I do not believe she thought I had sinned, I was so young!

Years passed and when I was ten years old I went to the old time "mourners' bench" in a "tabernacle meeting," professed conversion and joined the church. More years passed and I was sixteen years of age when at another revival I heard a good man whom I honored, a Methodist minister, say, "You must be able to point to the time and place of your conversion, and to describe it, or you are not saved."

He had just described his own wonderful experience of conversion and I began contrasting it with my own. I knew the time and place where I had professed conversion but how about the experience? I sat aghast! I was convinced all at once that I was utterly lost and without hope. The call for penitents came, and I hurried again to the "mourners'

bench" and tried to mourn, but without success. At home next morning I told mother what had happened. She comforted me, but felt that I ought to go on until I "became satisfied." But the meeting closed without giving me relief. During the next two years at almost every opportunity I went forward to the anxious seat, and was all the time in secret an earnest seeker after a Christian experience. I wanted to be converted.

Then I went away to college. Before my arrival I worried a good deal over the question as to whether I should take my stand as a Christian, or be reckoned among the unsaved in the college. A revival was to begin two weeks after college opened and I had to take sides. To be counted among the unsaved seemed to be proper, but was utterly repellent to me. I wanted to be with those who would work to save others, but I dared not be a hypocrite. On the Saturday before the meeting began I spent the entire day in the woods alone. It was my day of great battle! Had my soul been large enough and a Milton present, there would have been a theme for another epic.

Toward night I grew calm, and certain

decisions were slowly made, and I whispered them over: "I have done everything I have been told to do, everything I know how to do. If I know my own heart, there is nothing I have neglected. I may be lost; may be one of those who are not ordained to be saved; but I want to be reckoned among Christian people, to live a Christian life and to help others to be saved. I'll go on and say I am a Christian, do my best to live like one, work like one, pray and serve God as nearly as I can as a Christian should, and if I die at last and am lost I can't help it." I arose to my feet and like a flash from the skies, there swept through my memory that day when I had drawn the mo asses and mother told me what sin is. For a moment I was stupefied with the joy of it. Then I began to hurry toward the college, and at twilight met one of the professors and said to him, with a thrill of voice and heart, "I was converted when I was five years old at my mother's knee." He was startled, seemed uncertain what to reply, and I hurried on to my room.

Now, what had happened to me at five years of age, and again at eighteen when the memory of that early event returned to me?

Was I converted in the sense that I had received something which I had not possessed before, a quality of life, an endowment of grace? Was I regenerated, born again, in the same sense that a Bowery bum is regenerated when he repents in the Jerry McAuley mission?

If I was born the Lord's child, before I could cease to be his I must "backslide." Had I done that? Not consciously and intentionally! What was the nature of the remorse I felt while mother told me of the meaning and effect of sin? Was that genuine repentance, a sense of moral degradation such as wicked sinners must feel when they repent? I think not. It was horror at the idea of going on in life without God, my Father, rather than any fear of punishment or regret for the failure of my own character. There is no doubt that something happened to me, something definite and decisive. What was it?

My own opinion of what took place at that time may best be set forth by describing an event which happened in my own home at Kingfisher, Oklahoma, in 1901, when my daughter was just six years of age. One day she had been guilty of some misdemeanor for which her mother had reproved her, and told

her she must do no more. The child was offended, not at the reproof, but at the command to do the thing no more. After a few moments of sulky silence she said, poutingly, "If I was Mrs. Miller's little girl, she would let me do it."

Scarcely thinking what the child meant, her mother said, "Well, I guess you had better go and be Mrs. Miller's little girl then."

Without a moment's hesitation the child said, "All right, I will," and went immediately about packing up her things to go. The Miller family lived in the next block and were our very dear friends. My study was at the back of the house, and soon Mrs. Wagner came and told me what had happened, and said, "She's packing up, but I guess she'll get tired of it and quit pretty soon." She looked worried, however, as she went back to the sitting room; and in half an hour came back exclaiming "The child is all packed up, clothes, playthings, everything, and is actually going. What in the world shall I do?"

Now, of course, having given her consent for Alta to go, her mother could not change. Any way, what was needed was that Alta, not her mother, should change. We went back

to the sitting room together. Alta had on her hat, and her bags and boxes were ready to send, and she was smilingly waiting to say good-by. More to spar for time than anything else, I squatted on the floor beside her, fumbling with her satchel to see that it was properly fastened, and said: "So you are going to leave us, Alta? Mother and I are awfully sorry. We thought we had a little girl for always, and now we will have none, and your little brothers will have no sister. Will you come to see us sometimes?"

I think my voice shook a little, and a queer look came into Alta's eyes, and then she looked at her mother and saw tears running down her cheeks, and with a smothered cry she threw off her hat and sobbed, "I don't want to be Mrs. Miller's little girl! I want to be mamma's and papa's little girl." Of course there was glad making up and then unpacking, and we "lived happily ever after."

But what happened to Alta that day? She did not become her parents' child. She had been theirs all along. She had not been definitely aware until that morning of the fact that she preferred her mother above all other mothers. That she was her mother she had

accepted as a fact with which she had nothing to do and to which she gave no thought. But that morning she had opportunity to choose which one in all the world she wanted for her mother, and she chose her own mother. That did not change the mother's relationship to the child, but it did change the child's relationship to her mother. After that she was her mother's both by relationship and by her own election, her own choice. She had faced the opportunity to choose and had chosen her mother. There had been a bit of unpleasantness, not on her mother's part but on Alta's part, and she had almost chosen another woman as mother, and in a child's way suffered remorse when she realized that, after all, she did not want any other mother.

I think that is what happened to me back there at Montague, Texas. I came to the place where I could choose another spiritual master than my Father. I could choose self, or any one of a number of masters, and I began to do it. But my mother told me that if I should do that, my heavenly Father would be sad, and I could not be his little boy any more, so I just then and there elected him as my Father. That did not in the least change

his attitude or relationship to me; but it did change my attitude toward him. After that I was conscious that he was my Father by my own election. It was a matter of my own will. The day I joined my will to his I belonged to him. As to what change divine grace may have wrought in me at that moment, I will let the philosophers answer. What I know and urge is that it is the business of ministers, Sunday schools, Christian fathers and mothers, and the church to bring children at as early an age as possible to elect God as their Father, and he can be trusted to do for them whatever they need.

By what method can this voluntary choice be brought about? The crown of motherhood is not simply to bear children, but to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," to teach them to honor their earthly parents and love their heavenly Father. Whatever pastors, Sunday school, or church may do for childhood, it should not be necessary for them to lead children to choose God as Father. That should be the highest privilege of the father and mother. The supreme service a pastor can render to childhood is to teach mothers how to bring their own children

to Christ. But when the fathers and mothers fail, as they do fail, then the pastor and the church must not fail. Then is the church's great opportunity.

The pastor's part in this great work is to know the children, the little ones as well as those who are older. If he has a good memory he should know them all by name, but he must at least know their faces and recognize them when he meets them on the street. And it is important that the children know him. Of course they will always know his name and that he is the preacher in their church; but they must know him better than that. They must know that he loves them, and that he is the warm-hearted friend of every one of them. He must also teach them. His probationers' class should not be an ordeal but a delight to every child in it. They should delight to have him talk to them, and they will if they know he cares for them, and they will be proud to say that they are in the pastor's class.

The teachers in the Primary and Junior Departments occupy the most important positions in the Sunday school. Some time between the ages when children enter the Primary

and leave the Junior Department, they are going to make their choice of God as their Father, or elect something else to the mastery of their lives. It is not unimportant to reclaim wandering children of God and restore them to the Father's house and love; but it is even more important to prevent his little ones from going astray. It is the high privilege of primary and junior Sunday school teachers to guide those children aright whose parents fail to do their duty. Whatever else he neglects or for lack of time fails to do, the pastor should not fail to see that these teachers are of the right kind and qualification. Too often the Primary Department is considered a teacher training class, where young girls who have the will to serve are sent to learn how to teach, on the theory that in the Primary Department pleasant stories and kindly dispositions are all that are needed. Young mothers who are dealing faithfully with their own children, and have fresh in their minds the methods and spirit which win them to acceptance of their heavenly Father, will do best in these Departments, although anyone who has the mother love and the evangelistic vision, with some common sense, may become

efficient here. When some teacher, after a few years of experience, reveals particular ability in such work, see that she remains there.

However wisely parents may do their duty by the religious life of their children, or Sunday school teachers may do theirs, a time must come when the child shall choose for himself. I like to think of life as a highway, leading very plainly forward for the child until the day when he comes to a fork in the road. One of these roads stretching ahead leads to pleasure and indulgence, away from God's highway which turns more steeply up the hills and leads to service. Left to himself, any child will select the road that seems easier and promises more pleasure. Up to this time he has been traveling the normal road of childhood. But now he must choose for himself one or the other of diverging ways. It was there that I stood at that moment after I had drawn the molasses. It is there that every mother some day stands with her child. It is safely past that point that every teacher of primary or junior classes must seek to bring her pupils. It is not enough that during these years proper teaching and persuasiveness should be brought to bear upon the child.

He must be led to declare his choice. It is "with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." My mother's failure to recognize that fact and to lead me to a declaration at that moment left open for me the wilderness in which I wandered for thirteen years, and in which I might easily have lost my way. How blind are some pastors and many parents at this point!

How old ought a child to be to join the church? Just old enough to choose God as his Father. Last Sunday I preached to children. It was a simple sermon, explaining to them this matter of choosing God as Father. A five-year-old youngster sat between his parents just in front of me. How his eyes sparkled and snapped at times, and how his face lighted up with real spiritual vision, as he, in his childish way, chose God to be his own Father! I could gladly take such a child into the church. Understand? Certainly he does not understand doctrines, the battles which are before him, the temptations of life in maturity. But who does understand them? Who has foresight? Not I. But the child may understand that he chooses God, as revealed in Jesus Christ, to be his Father and the ruler of his

life and that he trusts him and loves him. What more can an adult do? The only thing such a child lacks is open confession and acknowledgment of his choice. Therefore the Sunday school should hold at least once a year a Decision Day service, in which the children may openly confess their faith and declare their choice of God and the Christian life.

The method of this Decision Day is not important, except that the teacher must have a place in it, and the confession should be made openly. It is my custom to have the entire Sunday school attend preaching service on that day, to preach a simple sermon giving an invitation to the children to come to the church altar with their teachers, and by so doing to declare their purpose to accept Christ. This, of course, must be followed by the probationers' class, where the pastor himself will lead the children in the practice of prayer and testimony, and will teach them the meaning of church membership and the Christian life. The final and climactic event will be the day of their reception into full church membership.

I have departed slightly in this chapter from my purpose to discuss only practical methods and not ideals and doctrines. I do

not want another man to tell me how to deal with the children of my church. My love for them must find its own way. But I do not want young pastors to pass through the Slough of Despond which was mine for ten years while I thought my way through on the question, "Must a child be converted, and at what age should he be brought into church fellowship?" Some of the grounds upon which I have reached conclusions satisfactory to myself have been here set forth. I believe a child does not require the same kind of conversion as an adult, but that for himself every child must make his choice and by an act of his own will set himself apart as God's own. This act of the child does not change God's attitude toward him, but changes the child's attitude toward God. This decision should be made and acknowledged and declared as early as the child is able to choose for himself. Some children will do it very early. I did it at five years of age and I know others who have done it even younger. On the other hand, I have known children at twelve who had not done it. Parents, teachers and pastors will find here an opportunity for using Godly judgment.

CHAPTER IX

CONSERVATION

It is said that Methodists "believe in backsliding." It would almost appear that the slander is true from the way many converts of revivals and other campaigns are too often left to "sink or swim" without help or seeming care from pastor or church. We do not "believe in backsliding," though we recognize that it is possible, even is likely to occur, and should fortify against it at every point.

I was sent occasionally, when a lad, to attend "round-ups" on the ranges of western Texas. The great cattle-kings would gather all the cattle for miles around, their own and other people's, unless the few farmers should keep their own small herds safely fenced in on that day and the day preceding. Even then some "strays" or some fence breakers would be in the "round-up," and the owners must look after them or they would be driven out of the country. The vast herd, numbering tens of thousands, would be gathered at a

convenient place in a valley and corralled on every side. Each owner would select a convenient spot, place herders there, and then send in cowboys to "cut out" his brand and drive each animal to his own herd, where it would be held. The small farmers would be present, each of them owning a private brand, and they would select a place where as a company they could hold their cattle. While a few of them attempted to herd their cattle, others went into the herd to "cut out" and drive their small holdings to this place of safety.

Two things were necessary for success in this task: there must be keen-eyed and skillful horsemen who would quickly recognize a brand, and have skill to "cut out" the animal bearing it and drive it to the proper herd. Then the herders must see to it that no animal once "cut out" should stray away again to some other herd. To permit that would make the efforts of "cutting out" of no value. Revivalists have been good hands at "cutting out," but how about the herders? It is not enough to secure conversions; we must save such as are converted.

To call the work of winning converts "herd-

ing" is a poor figure. Men cannot be herded into the kingdom of heaven; they must choose the kingdom of their own free will and remain in it of their own volition. However, the question of conservation of evangelistic effort is clearly before us, and we must face it.

Herbert Hoover has been pleading for greater production while some extreme social agitators are insisting that three hours' work a day, three days in the week, is sufficient to provide the world with all material goods necessary for its comfort. Mr. Hoover says the world needs increased production, and common sense urges that what the world needs is not less but more work. Work is not a calamity but a blessing. It is "three generations from shirt sleeves to shirt sleeves," some one has said. "Shirt sleeves" come the second time because the middle generation is denied the blessing of labor. One secret of strong physical, mental, and moral fiber is labor.

The world needs moral and spiritual help, character production, and this comes only through labor of heart and head as well as body. Not a trip to heaven "on flowery beds of ease" is the promise of religion; but "Go ye and disciple all nations" is its command, and

that requires work. Too long, however, work has been urged for the world's sake, without sufficient emphasis on the virtue in it for the worker. It is not enough for a man to produce his share of the world's goods, or to do a meager share toward saving the world, if he is able to do more. Every man for his own sake must work to the limit of his ability. Labor is not a calamity; it is a blessing, and they are rich who have plenty to do and the will to do it.

Then to save their converts a pastor and his church will put them to work. Without adding to present machinery, let us notice what a variety of opportunities the church affords for Christian service. First, there are the women's Missionary Societies, two of them and each of them worthy. Their dues are not large, though opportunities for large giving are not lacking, and the field for work is almost boundless. Every woman in the church should belong to one if not both of these, and the pastor will do his best to encourage such membership. Have no fear, timid soul! The trouble with the church is not "money, money, money," or "work, work, work," as some would have us believe. The trouble is rather

spiritual idleness, laziness, stinginess! Get a missionary society organized, and thank God for the chance to put some of your people to work in it, and for the opportunity to get their hearts stirred by the messages they hear.

Then there is the Ladies' Aid Society. Yes, by all means there ought to be such a society, and it ought to have every woman in the church in its membership. If the spirit of Christ is in its members, it will prove a potent factor for democracy in the social life of the church and will afford an opportunity for some to work who might not have talent for other forms of church work. Remember, I am speaking especially now of the value of the work to the worker. The Ladies' Aid Society will furnish work at which some of its members may complain, because they have no vision of its ultimate purposes, but if they do the work they will receive help whether they have the vision or not.

And there is the Men's Club, or Brotherhood, or Class. I confess that I prefer the last term. A Brotherhood, or Club suggests a purely social organization, while the term "Class" indicates other purposes than mere entertainment. Every man in the church

should be a member of the Class, and it should be organized for study, as well as for sociability. It should cooperate with the Ladies' Aid Society, on occasion should entertain that Society and the church, and should keep an eye on the church property. Its social committee should be on the lookout for strangers, transients, and outsiders, and help make the Class a real evangelistic agency.

Then there is the Epworth League for the young people. God grant it may really be for the young people. In some churches, where there are organized classes for young people in the Sunday school, there may be less demand for the League, but in the ordinary church there is still a place for it, and every young person of teen age in the church, at least those above fourteen, should be in its membership and find work there.

Sunday school classes, except in the Adult Department, should be small, not more than six or seven to a class, and five would be better. Providing these classes with teachers opens up a field for a large number of workers. Of course this is not work for new converts, but they may be trained for it and encouraged to serve in that capacity, as well as in other

official positions in the Sunday school. Every class in the school should be organized with the proper officers. By this means half the children and young people above the Primary Department will continually be in official position of some sort, and if tenure of office is not long, all of them in the course of the year will have some experience in leadership.

To keep class organizations alive and active, every class should have some aim, some objective toward which it strives and for which it works. This may be the raising of missionary money; the support of an orphan; missionary work in the community by which new members are to be brought into the school; some service to the pastor, such as distributing handbills, messages, etc.; or carrying flowers to the sick and shut-ins. The character of the community will determine the nature of the activity, but there should be work of some sort. A dead church is a church without work, and it is dead because it tried to exist in idleness. The theory that one must work only enough to produce what he himself needs will not harmonize with Christ's spirit, nor will it save the world or a single soul. And the regularly organized activities of the church

afford ample opportunities for giving most of the people abundant work to do.

Then there is the Unit System. Thank God that John Wesley gave it to us, and that we have had sense enough to return to it. Units must not be too large. Eight families will be enough and six might be better. One should be the leader with a will to see to it that every member of his Unit who is a church member has something to do. If there are twelve members of the church in the Unit, one may be an officer in a missionary society, two may be teachers in the Sunday school, one an Epworth League officer, and all variously but actively at work. So far as he can avoid it, a Unit Leader will not add to the labors of those who are already occupied, but having made a list of such as are not at work, he will study how, beginning with small tasks, such as helping to get others out to some committee meeting, finally to lead them to some steady employment. One member of the Unit should keep a record of Unit attendance at morning worship, while another could keep a record for the evening service. They should make monthly reports to the Leader, and with him and other helpers devise means for

improving the Unit record in church attendance.

One Unit member could be the Sunday school representative in that Unit, keep in touch with the members of the group and report prospective teachers, or absentees, and help, if possible, to get the latter back, and in various ways help both the Unit and the school. Other Unit members can attend to the interests of the prayer meeting, Epworth League, the circulation of the church paper, while others may assist the Cradle Roll Superintendent, Home Department Superintendent, or those who desire helpers in connection with the church budget and the benevolences. In this way it should be possible to put every church member in each Unit immediately to work, giving him responsibility and thus arousing his interest and conserving him for the church, as well as getting work done which makes genuine contribution to the progress of the Kingdom. If such work as has been suggested is not sufficient, there is always the work of evangelism, the effort to win converts, and each Unit has a field for such activity where consecrated endeavor saves the lost and saves the church as well.

No pastor could or should attempt to manage such an organization as I have suggested, except through genuine Unit Leaders. Reports to him should be made by Leaders only. All other workers in the Units should report and be responsible to their Leader. This will not give anyone an impossible task. I have found the busiest men in my church willing to accept the leadership of these Units. None of them, perhaps, has done perfectly the work possible in such a responsible position, but all of them have done some part of it effectively, and the fruitage of their labor is visible through all the church life and activities.

Finally, let every convert be associated with some reliable Christian man or woman for friendly counsel, guidance and help. For children, let their Sunday school teachers be such counselors; for youth, let older men and women as well as Sunday school teachers be appointed; and for adults, let the pastor suggest to some neighbor or friend of the convert that he is placing on him or her the responsibility for keeping up that convert's enthusiasm and activity. The pastor himself will call more often on new converts than on other people, but will never call without having

some definite purpose in view. He will have a bit of information to bring them, a book for them to read, or he will want them to help win some one for Christ, or do some special work in the church. It is definiteness of aim in such calls that makes them at all effective. Get your head and your heart to work on this great problem, brothers, and you will find a way to hold the children.

Infant mortality is being steadily lowered. It is being done not by sentimental but by scientific methods. New converts are infants in the church and mortality among them will be lowered by the same zeal and patience and common sense which, in the last analysis, mark the scientific method. The heart may furnish fire and enthusiasm for the task—it must do that if there is to be any power for it—but the mind, with cool and passionless reasoning, must find the method for its accomplishment. Head and heart go well together.

For community programs, social activities, clubs and parish house plans, I commend you to the lectures and books of experts along those lines, and urge that you think of them as definite methods, by conserving its fruits, for completing the work of evangelism.

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